

DENA'INA DUCH'DELDIH: "WE ARE LEARNING DENA'INA"
LANGUAGE GOALS AND IDEOLOGIES
AMONG ADULT LEARNERS OF DENA'INA ATHABASCAN

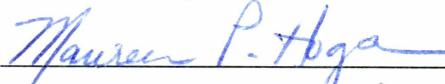
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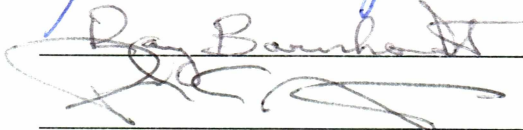
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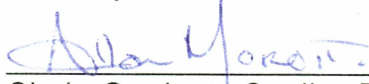






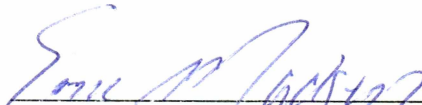


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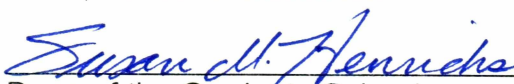


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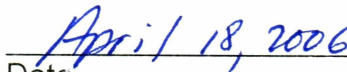
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AMONG ADULT LEARNERS OF DENA'INA ATHABASCAN

Presented to the Faculty
of the University of Alaska Fairbanks

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By

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ABSTRACT

The work contained herein consists of two research papers that emerged from a single qualitative study of goals and ideologies of adult learners of Dena'ina Athabascan in attendance at the 2005 Dena'ina Language Institute. The study draws upon 19 semi-structured, in-depth interviews that were collected and analyzed in order to increase community control over the program and to assist in the development of future programming offered by the University of Alaska Fairbanks. The first research paper suggests that goals of attendees clustered into four categories: fluency, literacy, cultural knowledge, and community building. More important than these four stated goals were the ways in which these goals connected to overarching themes of visibility, healing and resistance. It is argued that these themes are interconnected forms of, and tools for, empowerment. The second research paper suggests that the presence and work of university representatives is always ideological and always educational. It outlines the importance of ideological critique on the part of both community and institution when goals of empowerment are being sought after. The work contains both-site specific recommendations and broader implications for educational institutions involved in Native language programming.

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¹ Dr. P. Marlow is jointly appointed to the School of Education and the Alaska Native Language Center at the University of Alaska Fairbanks.

² Dr. J. Titus is the Department Chair of Sociology at the University of Alaska Fairbanks.

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⁴ Dr. A Boraas is a Professor of Anthropology at the Kenai River Campus of the University of Alaska Anchorage.

to thank Dr. R. Barnhardt⁵ for his support and his ability to take academic work and translate it into community practice.

I was also very fortunate to have the love and support from my entire family who were able to cheer me on from great distances. Both my mother and my sister's absolute faith in my abilities was integral to my success. Many thanks to Cameron whose enduring support and friendship saw me from start to finish... and I am finally finished!!

This work was supported through my research assistantship funded under U.S. Department of Education grant #T195E010045. I am grateful for the opportunities this position afforded me.

⁵ Dr. R. Barnhardt is a Professor with the Cross-Cultural Studies Program at the University of Alaska Fairbanks.

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

When one decides to undertake a reading of any work related to Native language revitalization in North America, one is usually confronted with the seemingly inevitable grim introductory paragraph that cites the alarming rates of language loss across the continent¹. I am choosing not to include this information here, not because I do not believe that the numbers of fluent speakers of most languages are in decline, but rather, I believe that you, the reader, are aware (on some level) of the state of Indigenous languages worldwide. I would like to avoid creating an air of despair, and I would like to start within a framework of hope. I would like to maintain a language of possibility over that of emergency, and doom. My inspiration for this choice comes from the people who form the basis of this work: the Dena'ina² people in attendance at the 2005 Dena'ina Language Institute (DLI) and the many supportive community members. Their involvement in the program reveals a most poignant sense of hope for their language. To honor their voices I believe I must pass on their sense of hope in my choice of language and discourse in these initial pages.

The DLI is a three-week language institute that focuses on Dena'ina language skills and Native language pedagogy. The DLI is organized in collaboration with the University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF), the Kenaitze Indian Tribe I.R.A. (KIT), the Alaska Native Heritage Center (ANHC) and the Kenai Peninsula College (KPC). In response to

¹See Krauss 1997; Skutnabb-Kangas 2001 for figures on global language decline.

² The former imposed academic spelling of Tanaina has been replaced by community members with the spelling Dena'ina.

language shift³, universities have increasingly become involved in assisting in community efforts at language revitalization⁴ and maintenance. However, linguistic human rights activists like Tove Skunabb-Kangas (1990) argue that the involvement of universities in language efforts can be problematic and may result in further disempowerment of Native peoples by Western organizations. Similarly, Morgan (2005) points out that the bureaucratic structure and Western-centric nature of universities may bring a host of problems to Indigenous language movements. Morgan goes on to highlight that these same institutions may be valuable partners to communities as they have greater access to grant funding⁵ and technological resources (cf. Greenwood and Levin, 2000). The question therefore arises: How can a university be involved in Indigenous language planning in a manner that respects Indigenous rights? I believe the university must not only be concerned with appropriate models for language acquisition, but also acknowledge that Indigenous language learning is connected to empowerment and self-determination (Iseke-Barnes, 2004).

In an effort to both improve university practice and to increase community control over the program, I undertook this qualitative study to see what were the language goals and ideologies of DLI participants. The study yielded two research papers contained herein, the work is organized as follows.

Chapter two situates me as a researcher and contextualizes the research questions by providing both the situational and theoretical underpinnings of the work.

³ Language shift, in this case, refers to a decrease in intergenerational transmission of a language (see Krauss, 1997). Reversing language shift (for both Krauss, 1997 and Fishman, 1991) entails restoring in-home transmission of language.

⁴ Language revitalization, here, is synonymous with reversing language shift (see Footnote 3)

⁵ The authors realize the nature of grant funding is highly problematic and that small communities have difficulty securing larger sums for sustained periods of time. The authors in no way feel this is just. We intend to work with community organizations to train proficient grant writers to access funding directly to their organizations.

Chapter three (paper one) gives a detailed description of the 2005 Dena'ina Language Institute. It then looks at the language goals of those in attendance at the 2005 DLI. The work contrasts learner goals with stated grant goals in order to assist in the development of future programming offered by the University of Alaska Fairbanks. This was accomplished by conducting 19 semi-structured in-depth interviews with adult Dena'ina learners. Analysis of the interviews revealed that goals of attendees clustered into four categories: fluency, literacy, cultural knowledge, and community building. More important than these four stated goals were the ways in which these goals connected to overarching themes of visibility, healing and resistance. Most importantly, Chapter three shows how these themes are interconnected forms of, and tools for, **empowerment**.

Chapter four, (paper two) traces the recursive process of research as I try to "identify" ideologies held by adult learners of Dena'ina Athabascan. This paper demonstrates the evolution of my understanding of the term 'ideology' and its importance in the educational setting of the DLI. The paper illuminates the difficulties in addressing the complex issue of "ideology" and makes methodological recommendations for future research. Drawing on two selected interviews, the paper explores an instance of ideological conflict between individuals and looks at the role of the institution in co-authoring both ideological stances. This paper suggests that ideological critique is essential in achieving the goals outlined in Chapter three; however for ideological critique to be truly transformative it should be continually executed by both institution and community alike.

Chapter five discusses the relationship between the two research papers and illuminates the complex relationship between "goals" and "ideologies". Goals are both supported by and confined by ideology. When post-colonial agendas are put forth by the

community, the pressing question becomes “whose ideology” is creating/ confining the goals? I underscore the importance for all faculty to undertake a ‘critical’ approach to teaching in the Indigenous setting regardless of field of expertise. My work shows that regardless of the intentions of university representatives, our presence and our actions have ideological outcomes that affect the community for periods of time far beyond our physical presence. Critical educator Paolo Friere (1991) points out that “education is *before*, is *during*, is *after*. [Education] is a process, a permanent process” (p.119, emphasis original). I further suggest that teaching ‘critically’ involves engaging the community in ideological critique. Chapter four concludes with suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER 2

Context of the Researcher

To understand from where this work emerges and where it intends to situate itself, I would like to be upfront about the situational and theoretical underpinnings that guide this work in its entirety. This work grew out of my graduate assistantship at the Alaska Native Language Center at the University of Alaska Fairbanks. My primary role was to facilitate the Dena'ina Language Institute⁶ (DLI) by arranging housing, travel and course scheduling for 26 students and 12 elders. When I accepted this position, I was experiencing the inevitable floundering on research topics for my thesis. My primary interests are related to the relationship between language and power, however, I was unable to envision a study that was both feasible and somehow socially meaningful. My supervising professor, Dr. Patrick Marlow, offered that I reflect on the Institute that I would be organizing and attending. He asked me to consider developing a study based on the event. I was given complete freedom in the design, and was under no obligation to accept this offer.

Initially, I was very reluctant to take on this topic as the history of 'research' in relation to Aboriginal⁷ populations is so troublesome (see Tuhiwai Smith, 1999 for full discussion). Historically, research has been exploitive, has been used to devalue Native ways of knowing, and above all, has been used to create and indoctrinate discourses that can be used as justifications for the unequal relations between minority and majority

⁶ For rich description of the institute see Chapter 3

⁷ As a Canadian writer I am apt to use vocabulary more accepted in my country of origin. Aboriginal is the term generally accepted in the Canadian context to refer to Canada's indigenous peoples. I will use this term and the term Indigenous interchangeably when referring to Indigenous populations without the specification of a geographic location. In Alaska, the widely used term is Alaska Native. I will use this term when designating Aboriginal persons in the Alaska area.

groups⁸. With these hesitations and my reservations about completing a study as a Non-Native researcher with a Native community I committed to a theoretical framework that I felt would in some way address my concerns.

Theoretical Frameworks

In the postmodern turn, this work makes use of multiple frameworks to approach the process of research. The three theoretical frameworks discussed here: critical pedagogies, Foucault's power/knowledge/truth, and Bourdieu's reflexive sociology, are not adopted in their entirety, but rather pieces are taken from each and then reassembled to form a personal theoretical framework that suits my interests and intentions as a researcher.

Critical pedagogies

While I would wholly agree with McLaren (1998) that "there is no one critical pedagogy" (p.227), the task of discussing the variations and intricacies of critical theories is far beyond the scope of this paper. In her work *Critical Pedagogy: Notes from the Real World* (2nd ed) J. Wink (2000) challenges her readers to create their own definitions of critical pedagogy. For the purposes of this work, my critical pedagogy is grounded in three core assumptions:

1. *Western democracies are actually highly unequal societies.* Inequities can be based on factors (alone or in combination) such as race, class, gender, sexual orientation, and/or socio-economic status. These inequities lead to what is referred to as social order. The social order is not just.

⁸ I use the terms minority/ majority with great reluctance. In the Alaskan context "minority" is particularly absurd as in some communities the Alaska Native population outnumbers the non-Native population, making them not numerically a minority. It's use is a result of no widely accepted alternative.

2. *Social inequity is reproduced through the process of hegemony: the dissemination of a dominant ideology.* Gramsci's (1971) notion of hegemony suggests that dominant power is exercised not only by force, but by gaining popular consent through institutions such as media, schools, family and the church (Kincheole & McLaren, 2000). Social inequality comes to be seen as normal, natural, and inevitable thereby limiting potential challenges to the system.
3. *Education/ research in education are sites of ideological reproduction in which hegemonic structures can either be maintained or deconstructed.* Schooling and Western research have often been labeled primary sites for hegemony. Althusser's (1971) essay 'Ideology and ideological state apparatuses' names education, at all levels, as primarily responsible for instilling an ideology of consent to the masses, thereby securing power for the dominant group(s). Fortunately, criticalists believe that this is not the inevitable fate of research and education. Critical educators believe that education can become "sites of resistance and democratic possibility"⁹ (Kincheole & McLaren, 2000, p.280). Critical researchers "have the potential to extend knowledge or to perpetuate ignorance" (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999, p.176). I approached the work with both awareness of a troubled history and a hope for an improved future.

⁹ See also, Freire (1994), hooks (2003), Apple (1990), & Brookfield (2005)

Foucault's power/ knowledge/ truth effects

This work assumes that the relationship between concept and object is never fixed, rather it is mediated by unequal social relations,¹⁰ and by extension, knowledge is fundamentally mediated by power relations.¹¹ In simpler terms, meaning and 'knowledge' are social reproductions based on what is accepted in a given society. These social reproductions become the 'truth effects' that shape and limit our existence. Foucault's *Archeology of Knowledge* (1972) explores these ideas in detail. Foucault's work is never directly aimed at education, however his explorations of power/knowledge/truth are useful for post-colonial agendas in education. Brookefield (2005) summarizes Foucault's arguments: "Whoever is in a position of power is able to create knowledge supporting that power relationship. Whatever a society accepts as knowledge or truth inevitably ends up strengthening the power of some and limiting the power of others" (p.136). This work intends to examine what types of knowledge are created, supported, and/ or negated in the context of the Dena'ina language institute. The purpose of examining ideologies of language is to establish who benefits from which assumptions/ knowledges. Further I accept that the institution (including myself) privileges certain knowledges. I would like to use the research contained within to begin to deconstruct¹² my own assumptions as a language teacher in order to begin to address the issues of inequity that are central to critical pedagogies.

¹⁰ Derrida explores this concept in detail in *Of Grammatology* (1979) and *Speech and phenomena* (1973)

¹¹ This is based on the premise of knowledge as social construction as discussed in Berger and Luckman's (1966) work, *The Social construction of Reality: A treatise in the sociology of knowledge*.

¹² Deconstruction here is used as explored by Derrida in *of Grammatology* (1979) and *Speech and phenomena* (1973)

Bourdieu's reflexive sociology

Bourdieu's contribution to the field of sociology goes well beyond some key points I make use of here. From his *The craft of sociology: Epistemological preliminaries* (with Chamboredon & Passeron, 1991) and *An invitation to reflexive sociology* (with Wacquant, 1992) I take away three guiding principles that address the ways in which I approached this research

1. I must continually take into account my own presuppositions about my research and understand the extent to which my way of 'seeing' informs what I see. This means that what I offer here is an interpretation. An interpretation formed by me in light of my own background. I attempt to be up front about my own personal history in places where it may offer some detail to my interpretations.
2. The purpose of social research is not to gather information about how society is organized but to critique what discourses stand as truths¹³.
3. Research is never innocent or uncontaminated. Bourdieu challenges researchers to not only examine their personal presuppositions, but also to look at the assumptions made by the field of inquiry. It is important to be upfront about why one is exploring the research questions. What social conditions are pre-requisite to the professional interest in these questions?

The third principle I am borrowing from Bourdieu's reflexive sociology leads us into the next discussion. Why did I undertake this study?

¹³ This principle becomes dependant on Foucault's explanations of the interrelationship of knowledge/power/truth discussed above.

Rationale

With the academic freedom to design and execute this study, why is it that I decided upon topics of goals and ideologies as the basis for my inquiry? I designed in order to achieve four goals:

- 1) *To ensure ideological compromise in programming,*

Teaching is a political act. As Apple and Weis (1983) explain, educational systems and personnel define “the knowledge of certain groups as legitimate for production and /or distribution, while other group’s knowledge and traditions are considered inappropriate as academic knowledge” (p.7). Curriculum is designed, syllabi are laid out, and methods of instruction are chosen according to the ideologies of the teacher, the department, the University. Those of us who seek to transform educational practices hope to deconstruct our own ideologies while at the same time legitimizing other forms of knowledge brought forth by the learners thereby working towards ideological compromise in classroom programming and practice. In teaching second languages at the University level, the common ideology is that the students are motivated by instrumental goals, such as employment, affluence, prestige, travel. I contend that Dena’ina learners have non-instrumental¹⁴ goals that can only be identified by them.

Much research in the field of Native language programming suggests that programs will be more effective and enduring if they are created by the community (Ruiz, 1995, Dauenhauer & Dauenhauer, 1998) or at a minimum reflect community goals. By discussing the goals and desires of Dena’ina language learners, it is my hope that we

¹⁴ Normally motivation for language learning is defined using the binary of integrative and instrumental (see Gardner and Lambert 1972). Integrative denotes a desire to become a member of the group who speaks the target language. This term does not exactly apply to Dena’ina learners as they are of Dena’ina ancestry. Perhaps a term such as re-integrative is in order.

can put the community at the forefront of university programming, further, to change the academic landscape from top-down instruction to mutual dialogue between institution and community.

2) *To document qualitative language goals of the group*

Career ladder grants operate under the federally legislated No Child Left Behind act and therefore grant proposals must provided quantitative goals and outcomes that can be easily measured in numbers (and arguably dollars). The primary goal of the grant¹⁵ supporting the DLI, as originally written in 2001, is to train and certify bilingual Alaska Native teachers. To date we have not certified any Dena'ina teachers¹⁶, therefore it could be argued that the program has been a failure. However, this analysis is overly simplistic, incomplete and in my opinion, incorrect. DLI enrollment jumped from three students in 2003 to over 35 attendees in 2005. I am convinced that the creation of a forum for language use and learning is in demand. While, I don't view teaching certification as an invaluable goal, I wanted to explore other possible goals we may be achieving in hosting this annual event. Perhaps some qualitative outcomes of the institute are more valuable to participants than certification. In the end, if it seems as though community goals are too distant from grant goals, we as an institution with access to 'skilled' grant writers¹⁷ should assist Dena'ina groups in securing funds on their own terms.

¹⁵ Genage' Career Ladder for Athabascan Teachers, U.S. Department of Education grant #T195E010045 is discussed in full in Chapter three.

¹⁶ It is noteworthy that one elder is in her final stage of practicum credits and therefore will graduate by the Spring of 2006.

¹⁷ Zepeda (2005) discusses community grants proposals and their inability to compete with institutional proposals. In response to community demand, the 2006 American Language Development Institute will include a grant writer's workshop. Grant funding can be seen as means of gate keeping

- 3) *To describe a model of an institution-community partnership in the domain of Native language revitalization.*

A transformative educator¹⁸ often looks to colleagues for insight. In the context of Alaskan Native Language Revitalization, language rights advocates value models and research from all Indigenous groups and look to their successes for guidance. For example the Yup'ik immersion programs are based in part on the Hawaiian model. To contribute to the field of Native language education is to "write your wrongs and rights,"¹⁹ to share models of programs and research so that Indigenous activists, scholars and those who support them can have a global bank of references to draw on and to draw inspiration from.

- 4) *To fill a void in Dena'ina language research:*

To date, Dena'ina language work has been conducted primarily by linguists and therefore the bulk of the literature on the Dena'ina Language is documentation and grammatical analysis.²⁰ The earliest known documentation of Dena'ina consists of a wordlist collected by William Anderson in 1778 during Captain Cook's voyage. This was followed by several more wordlists collected in the 19th century by Davydov (1803), Lisianski (1804), Rezanov (1805), Wrangell (1835), Doroschin (1848), Schiefner (1874) and Staffeief and Petroff (1886).

Contemporary linguistic documentation was begun in earnest in the 1970s by J. Tenenbaum and James Kari. Tenenbaum's 1978 Columbia University dissertation is a

¹⁸ A transformative educator is one who sees the potential for social change to occur within educational settings.

¹⁹ Here I am drawing on Michelle Fine's 1994 essay "Working the Hyphens: Reinventing Self and Other in Qualitative Research."

²⁰ I am indebted to my colleague Andrea Berez for the summary of past linguistic documentation of the Dena'ina language. This information appears in detail on www.qenaga.org

CHAPTER 3

VISIBILITY, HEALING AND RESISTANCE THROUGH LANGUAGE LEARNING: VOICES FROM THE 2005 DENA'INA LANGUAGE INSTITUTE¹

Abstract

How can a university be involved in Indigenous language planning in a manner that respects Indigenous rights? This paper begins to address the complexities of the institutional involvement in Native language programming by looking at a program in Alaska. It offers a detailed description of the 2005 Dena'ina Language Institute and then looks at the language goals of those in attendance. The work contrasts learner goals with stated grant goals in order to assist in the development of future programming offered by the University of Alaska Fairbanks. This was accomplished by conducting 19 semi-structured in-depth interviews with adult Dena'ina learners. Analysis of the interviews revealed that goals of attendees clustered into four categories: fluency, literacy, cultural knowledge, and community building. More important than these four stated goals were the ways in which these goals connected to overarching themes of visibility, healing and resistance. This paper shows how these themes are interconnected forms of, and tools for, empowerment

¹ Bell, L.A. & Marlow, P.E. (2006) Paper in preparation for submission to *Anthropology and Education Quarterly*.

Introduction

With the bulk of the world's languages in decline (Krauss, 1992; Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000) many Tribes and Native organizations are turning to universities for help in reversing this trend (examples include Morgan, 2005; Blair, Rice, Wood & Janvier, 2002; Dementi-Leonard & Gilmore, 1999). Linguistic human rights activists like Tove Skunabb-Kangas (1990) argue that the involvement of universities in language efforts can be problematic and may result in further disempowerment of native peoples by Western organizations. Tuhiwai-Smith (1999) outlines the troubling past of research in relationship to Indigenous populations and proposes that these problems can begin to be addressed through post-colonial, deconstructionist frameworks. In response to these important criticisms, researchers and educators are increasingly reflecting critically on their roles in the reproduction of inequity and are making methodological choices to address these concerns. Research and education can thus become "sites of resistance and democratic possibility" (Kincheole & McLaren, 2000, p.280).

As Morgan (2005) points out, the bureaucratic structure and Western-centric nature of universities may bring a host of problems to Indigenous language movements, however these same institutions may be valuable partners to communities as they have greater access to grant funding² and technological resources (Greenwood and Levin, 2000). The question therefore arises: How can a university be involved in Indigenous language planning in a manner that respects

² The authors realize the nature of grant funding is highly problematic and that small communities have difficulty securing larger sums for sustained periods of time. The authors in no way feel this is just. We intend to work with community organizations to train proficient grant writers to access funding directly to their organizations.

Indigenous rights? We believe the university must not only be concerned with appropriate models for language acquisition, but also acknowledge that Indigenous language learning is connected to empowerment and self-determination (Iseke-Barnes, 2004).

This paper presents a qualitative study of one university-community partnership for language maintenance. The Dena'ina Language Institute (DLI), (organized in collaboration with the University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF) and The Kenaitze Indian Tribe I.R.A. (KIT), the Alaska Heritage Center (ANHC) and Kenai Peninsula College (KPC)) is a grant funded³ project set up to improve the quality of Dena'ina language programming in schools and to train and provide access to degree programs for would-be language teachers. The impetus for this study was our sense that the stated grant goals of the DLI were not being met due to a mismatch between the university's and funding agencies goals for the project on the one hand, and the goals of program participants on the other.

In an effort to both improve university practice and to increase community control over the program, we undertook a qualitative study to see what were the goals of program participants. An analysis of 19 semi-structured, in-depth interviews revealed that goals of 2005 DLI participants connected to themes of visibility, healing and resistance. These highly socio-emotional goals were not considered when the initial grant goals were developed. In light of these results, we are looking critically at our program design to see how (or even if) we can facilitate these goals within the constraints of a large research institution.

³ Genage' Career Ladder for Athabascan Teachers, U.S. Department of Education grant #T195E010045.

Background

The Dena'ina⁴ are one of eleven Athabascan⁵ groups in Alaska. Located in the south central region of the state, Dena'ina territory extends inland on both sides of the Cook Inlet (see *Figure 3a*). The Dena'ina lead a variety of lifestyles ranging from subsistence hunting and fishing in remote villages, like Nondalton and Lime Village, to running multi-million dollar businesses in urban centers, like Anchorage and Kenai. While it is estimated that there are around 900 Dena'ina living in Alaska, fewer than 75 are Dena'ina speakers (Krauss, 1997). Fluent speakers that remain are generally over 60 and/or past child bearing age thereby placing the Dena'ina language at stage 7 or 8 on Fishman's (1991) Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (GIDS)⁶.

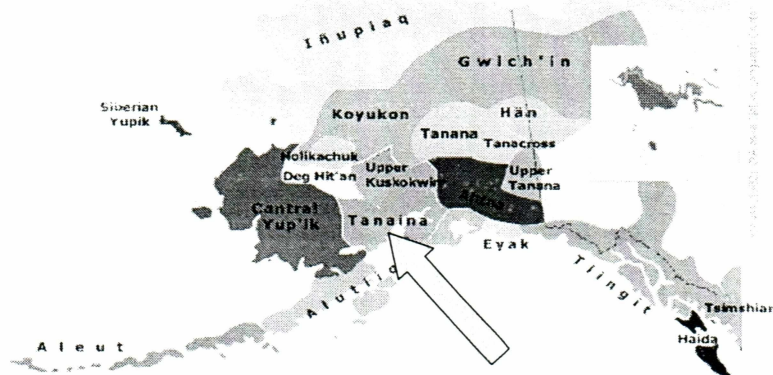


Figure 3a: Map of Native Peoples and Languages of Alaska (Krauss, 1982)⁷

⁴ The former imposed academic spelling of Tanaina has been replaced by community members with the spelling Dena'ina.

⁵ On March 20, 1997, Tanana Chiefs Conference adopted Resolution 97-35 designating *Athabascan* as the correct spelling after many years of debate and reform. Other spellings include *Athabaskan* and *Athapaskan*.

⁶ In *Reversing Language Shift* (1991) Fishman outlines a scale used to measure "the sociolinguistic disruption" of language communities or networks (p.87). The typology uses the numbers 1-8. A higher the GIDS rating reveals greater language shift, and lower intergenerational continuity.

⁷ Note that the map uses the former spelling Tanaina to designate Dena'ina.

A dwindling number of speakers however, should not be mistaken for disinterest in language learning (see, among others, Wyman, 2004; Tulloch, 2004). Interest in learning Dena'ina is demonstrated by the increasing numbers of participants in the annual Dena'ina Language Institute (DLI). In 2005, the DLI brought together 26 adult Dena'ina learners and 11 Dena'ina elders for three weeks of intensive language learning.

The Language

Dena'ina has four⁸ mutually intelligible, regional dialects: Upper Inlet, Outer Inlet, Iliamna and Inland (see *Figure 3b*). The primary differences between the dialects are lexical. The four dialects have experienced language shift⁹ at varying speeds. The Outer Inlet and Upper Inlet dialects encompass urbanized communities where Dena'ina are the minority. As such the language has been in direct competition with English for over a century. There is but one¹⁰ identifiable speaker of the Outer Inlet dialect, while the Upper Inlet dialect may have as many as six remaining fluent speakers, all over the age of 70. There may be another six remaining fluent speakers of the Iliamna dialect, the language of the modern villages of Pedro Bay and Iliamna.¹¹

⁸ A fifth dialect, the Seldovia dialect is extinct (Boraas, 2006)

⁹ Language shift is established by a decrease in intergenerational transmission of a language (See Krauss, 1997). Reversing language shift (for both Krauss, 1997 and Fishman, 1991) entails restoring in-home transmission of language.

¹⁰ Fred Mamaloff is living in Anchorage, however for health and other reasons is unable to attend the DLI. The word *identifiable* is significant. Speakers may be reluctant to use the language, or may not see their language abilities as proficient enough to share.

¹¹ The village of Iliamna has a mixed population of both Central Yup'ik and Dena'ina ancestry.

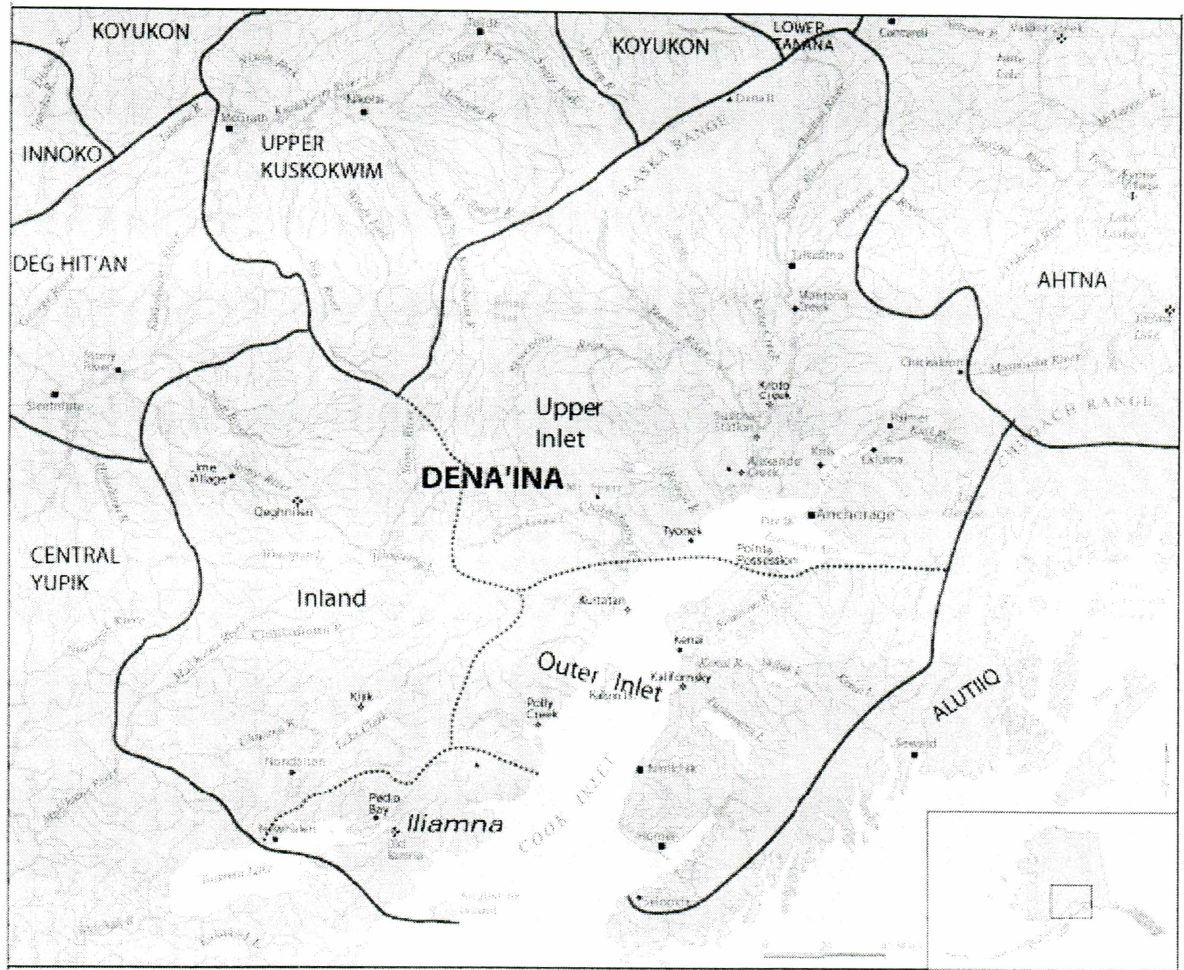


Figure 3b: Dialect Map for the Dena'ina Language

(by. J. Kari as on www.qenaga.org)¹²

Inland, the strongest of the four dialects, is currently spoken by up to 50 people (Kari, 2006), many of whom are in the villages of Nondalton and Lime Village and most of whom over the age of 50. The geographical isolation of these two villages has most likely helped to sustain this dialect. However, English is now the first language of all

¹² The Dena'ina names for these places are as follows: Idlughet (Eklutna), Niteh (Knik), Tsat'ukeyh (Susitna Station), Tubughnenq' (Tyonek), Kahtnu (Kenai), Ch'ak'dalitnu (Iliamna), Nunvendaltin (Nondalton), Hek'dichen Hdakaq' (Lime Village).

children in these villages. Speakers from all three “living”¹³ dialectal regions were present at the DLI.

Logistics and legalities

The Dena'ina Language Institute (DLI) is funded through the United States Department of Education Office of English Language Acquisition (formerly the Office of Bilingual Education and Multilingual Affairs). The DLI is part of a larger federally funded project¹⁴ to provide training to potential language teachers involved in Dena'ina, Tanacross, and Upper Tanana language programming.

The grant was written with four clear goals relating to teacher education and proficiency development (see *Table 3a*). To facilitate these goals, an on-campus Institute was created in 2001. Grant funds were used to create the Institute and to subsidize participation and attendance of interested students. As a partnership between multiple organizations, the project required individual agencies (Tribal Councils, Native Corporations, or employers) to demonstrate a commitment¹⁵ to potential Institute participants before grant funds could be released to support them. These grant funded participants were entitled to free travel to the Institute and room and board for the duration of the session. Finally, to encourage movement towards degree/certificate

¹³ Living dialects refers to those dialects with two or more remaining speakers. The term appears in quotes as death-related metaphors, although commonly used in discussions of endangered languages (see Crystal, 2000), are overly negative and can be seen as a mechanism of dissociating the language from the speaker, thereby further disempowering the speech community. The term the term “living” also implies that death is natural and inevitable. It can be argued that language shift is generally the result of unequal power relations, and therefore by no means natural or inevitable (see Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000).

¹⁴ Genage' Career Ladder for Athabascan Teachers, U.S. Department of Education grant #T195E010045.

¹⁵ Agencies demonstrate their commitment to participants by providing a small stipend (\$500 per year) to support their participation in the program, and by stating that they will be willing to hire the participant if and when an appropriate position becomes available, or, if they already hold such a position, promote the participant to a position commensurate with their training.

completion, full tuition and fees were made available for fall and spring classes at any university within the greater university of Alaska system.

Table 3a: Summarized Grant Goals

- | |
|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Provide coursework that leads to completion of a related degree programs (Certificate/AAS and Endorsement/M.Ed.). 2. Place program participants in positions commensurate with their education with salary rate ranges adjusted to reflect the advanced level of training. 3. Foster fluency in Dena'ina, Tanacross and Upper Tanana.¹⁶ 4. Raise the profile of bilingual education as a career choice. |
|--|

The 2001 summer Language Institute was held in Fairbanks. Participants from all three Athabascan groups took core courses in language related topics (linguistics, second language acquisition). Two language classes were offered. One was in Dena'ina, the other was a joint class in Tanacross and Upper Tanana.¹⁷ After two years on the Fairbanks campus, many participants expressed a desire to move the sessions off campus and into the communities/regions being served. In an effort to grant greater autonomy to the communities and students themselves, the university responded and the Institute, singular, became plural. Of two language Institutes, only the Dena'ina gathering (DLI) continues.¹⁸

¹⁶ This is addressed through a combination of summer-intensive language classes (3-hours per day for three weeks) and a modification of the Master-Apprentice language learning model pioneered by the Native California Network and Leanne Hinton (Hinton, 2001).

¹⁷ Tanacross and Upper Tanana are closely related languages, and the communities are related by marriage and tradition. For these reasons, the Tanacross and Upper Tanana groups chose to form a single language class on campus and a single Institute when programs moved off the Fairbanks campus.

¹⁸ The joint Tanacross/Upper Tanana summer program was set up in Tok, Alaska, a hub community in Eastern Alaska for the Tanacross and Upper Tanana regions. This program faded after two years.

Kenai was chosen as the site for the Dena'ina Language Institute as it had facilities to accommodate a large influx of visitors. Kenai is accessible by road and is home to the Kenai River Campus of the University of Alaska Anchorage. The campus is in walking distance to a private college (Alaska Christian College) that offers comfortable accommodation at a reasonable cost. The new site for the Institute brought about a partnership between the University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF), the Kenaitze Indian Tribe I.R.A. (KIT), and Kenai Peninsula College (KPC). The support of these partner agencies has helped raise DLI attendance from 3 learners in 2002 to over 26 learners and 11 elders in 2005. All partners involved believe the co-operation of these agencies is central to the success of the DLI.

The Dena'ina of the Kenai community were eager to take on the DLI. The facilities available made the city of Kenai an attractive choice from a logistical perspective. However, one key element was missing: Dena'ina speakers. As noted above, the Outer Inlet dialect of Dena'ina has experienced the greatest language shift and as such, there is but one identifiable fluent speaker of Outer Inlet Dena'ina, the ancestral language of the Kenai area. The age and health of Fred Mamaloff (fluent Kenai speaker) preclude him from participation. The DLI depended on elders (speakers) from other communities who attended the Institute to facilitate language learning.

What is the Dena'ina Language Institute?

The DLI is a three week summer intensive program that offers students a chance to earn university credit in Dena'ina and other courses related to language revitalization. The 2005 course schedule (see *Table 3b*) included *Beginning Conversational Dena'ina 1 & 2*, *Teaching Methods for Alaska Native Languages*, *Curriculum and Materials*

Development for Alaska Native Languages, Technology for Alaska Native Languages, and Beginning Athabascan Literacy.

Morning classes (*Beginning Conversational Dena'ina 1 & 2*) were intended to address the grant goal of fluency. These classes were intended to improve oral proficiency in Dena'ina. The notion of who can “teach” the language is problematic in the case of Dena'ina. Most speakers are elders and many are not comfortable working with a large group of students in a classroom setting. The first year class had 20 students and six elders. The class was led by two young Dena'ina women, Michelle Ravenmoon and Shauna Sagmoen, who have been learning the language for several years and are proficient in basic Dena'ina. The women planned lessons with the help of Kim Aragon-Stewart, a UAF faculty member from the Foreign Languages Department.

Table 3b: Class Schedule for Dena'ina Language Institute 2005

Time	Courses
9:00-12:00	ANL 121- Beginning Conversational Dena'ina ANL 122- Beginning Conversational Dena'ina II
1:00-4:00	ANL 287- Teaching Methods for Alaska Native Languages ANL 288- Curriculum and Materials Development for Alaska Native Languages
7:00- 9:00	ANL 295- Technology for Alaska Native Languages (Tues & Thurs) ANL 108- Beginning Athabascan Literacy (Wed.)

Together, they created lesson plans, reviewed vocabulary with elders and prepared for the following day's class. The language instructors, aware of their language limitations, wanted to involve the elders as best they could. After two days of sitting in a large circle

in a bleak windowless classroom, the instructors realized the elders' knowledge was not being maximized and that the learning environment was uncomfortable for elders and students alike. Michelle and Shauna developed a new structure that was very well received. The class moved to a large common area that had many small round tables and a bank of windows looking out toward the Kenai River. Each table had an elder and 3-5 students. Each day the instructors would introduce new vocabulary and phrases and then suggest some practice activities. The students would then work with the elder at their table to practice the lesson. This facilitated better language learning and also allowed the students to get to know the elder better. Participants were grateful for the opportunity to interact with elders in these small comfortable groups.

The second year class was substantially smaller, and therefore every student was able to be paired directly with an elder. This class was led by two Dena'ina women, Donita Peter and Pauline Hobson, each with experience in language teaching in various settings. Both classes emphasized oral teaching strategies and communicative methodologies.¹⁹

Afternoon classes, *Teaching Methods* and *Curriculum and Materials* (ANL 287/288) were geared towards grant funded participants and are part of required coursework for the targeted certificate in *Native Language Education* offered by UAF. Course content focused on appropriate teaching strategies and second language methodologies. Students were encouraged to design curriculum around newly acquired vocabulary in order to solidify their learning and to prepare to pass on language in educational contexts.

¹⁹ Communicative methodologies seek to simulate the conditions of real communication (Johnson & Johnson, 1999, p.68). For full discussion see, among others, Littlewood (1981) and Johnson (1982).

Technology for Alaska Native Languages (ANL 295), focused on web design using HTML for the purposes of language learning and documentation. Further the course explored appropriate means of recording and storing audio data. *Beginning Athabascan Literacy* (ANL 108) introduced students to the basics of Dena'ina phonology.

Although university coursework was a major goal of the grant, it was only one element of the DLI. Cultural events occurred both formally and informally over the course of the three weeks. The DLI co-occurred with the Dena'ina Festival sponsored by KIT.²⁰ Institute participants joined KIT members in a weekend full of activities including a traditional feast, the presentation of Dena'ina songs and dances, and the annual setting of the traditional salmon fishing net. The setting of the net is very symbolic to the group for two reasons. First, it marks the 1989 political victory for limited subsistence fishing rights resulting in the current educational fishery where a single set-net can be operated by the Tribe for subsistence purposes. Second, catching and sharing early run salmon is directly connected to the "First Salmon Ceremony" (Osgood, 1937 p.148-9) a world renewal ceremony of the Dena'ina people. Other formal outings included a guided visit to Kalifornsky Village: an abandoned Dena'ina village historically inhabited between the years ca 1820-1920 and occupied during the prehistoric era as well.

Informal teachings seemed to be the most memorable experiences for DLI participants. The housing facilities had a large fire pit encircled with simple wooden benches. This became the site for evening gatherings where elders shared their skills and led interested students in traditional basket making using either birch or spruce bark.

²⁰ The relationship between the Dena'ina Festival and the Dena'ina Language Institute was established in 2004 at the invitation of the Kenaitze Indian Tribe I.R.A.

The fire was also the site for the sharing of traditional stories, some told in Dena'ina others in English.

A Look at the learners

The initial study design assumed that all DLI participants would be of Dena'ina descent. However, participants came from a variety of ethnic backgrounds. Participants who are themselves Dena'ina (referred to as Dena'ina Participants, or DP) made up the largest sub-group (DP = 46%, 12/26), followed by two equally represented groups: Non-Natives (referred to as Non-Natives, or NN = 27%, 7/26) and Alaska Natives that are not themselves Dena'ina (including Yup'ik, Aleut, and Ahtna Athabascan individuals, referred to collectively as Alaska Native non-Dena'ina, or AKND = 27% 7/26).

We firmly believe that decisions regarding Native languages are the right and responsibility of the group to whom the language belongs (see Warner, 1999). However, given the diversity of participants in the Institute, we decided to conduct interviews with representatives from all subgroups²¹ to see how goals complimented or conflicted with each other. The idea was to conduct interviews with all 26 participants. Time allowed for only 19.

The physical relocation of the DLI to Kenai sparked community interest in language learning. The majority (70%) of Institute participants were from the Kenai area. The NN and the AKND groups were primarily from Kenai (86% and 71% respectively). The DP group was almost evenly split between local and visiting students (58%, 7/12 and 42%, 5/12 respectively).

²¹ DC = 50% (10/20), AKND = 20% (4/7), and NN = 30% (6/7)

Partnership with KIT also has helped to shape who has enrolled in DLI classes. KIT employs 50% of the DP, 57% of the AKND and 71% of the NN groups. In 2005, in an effort to support language revitalization by the tribe, KIT agreed to fund employee salaries for Institute attendance. In 2004, some KIT employees attended morning classes and worked evenings and weekends to make up the time at work. KIT recognized the strain this put on both the personal lives and learning goals of employees.

KIT employees from the DP and AKND groups generally worked at the Tribe's head office in the department of culture and education²². The NN group employees were primarily from KIT's Kenaitze Head Start program.²³ The positions held by DLI participants include classroom teachers, a special needs assistant, a family outreach worker and an administrator. Their attendance at the Institute was professional development intended to help Head Start staff integrate language and cultural knowledge across the existing curriculum. This group had a wide range of previous Dena'ina learning experiences. The staff had received some language training (songs, numbers) from KIT's language coordinator Wanda Reams; however, they needed reinforcement of language already acquired as well as access to new, classroom-related language.

DLI participants ranged in age from 16-50, with the average attendee being 31. Six participants were male, and 20 were female. All interviewed participants had a minimum of a high school diploma and at least a few courses towards a post-secondary

²² The Cultural Heritage program and education department was housed in the same building as the head office at the time of the study, however, it is now located in a separate facility adjacent to the head start program.

²³ Head Start programs are federally supported early education facilities for children from low income or otherwise 'at-risk' populations.

degree. On average, participants were Bachelor level degree holders and two participants had completed their Master's degrees.

Purpose: Room for Improvement

When the Dena'ina community signed on to the grant in 2001 there was no direct assessment of the needs and unique characteristics of Dena'ina learners. This prompted the design and implementation of a qualitative study looking at the language goals and ideologies of adult Dena'ina learners at the 2005 summer Dena'ina Language Institute. The intent of the study was to gather sufficient information about participants in order to make changes for 2006 that reflect community and learner goals.

Study Design

A mixed-methods approach was used to collect data for this study. Bell compiled the data as part of her Master's thesis and attended the Institute as part of her duties as a graduate assistant. Observational data was recorded as Bell acted as a participant observer. She undertook morning language classes with the learners and engaged in most other DLI activities. She made ethnographic descriptions of the site, participants, interactions and daily events. To add depth to the observations, 19 semi-structured, in-depth interviews were conducted.

Initially I used an opportunistic approach, making appointments with whomever I saw available. However, after 15 interviews I analyzed my sample looking at gender, ethnicity and tribal affiliation. My analysis revealed that men, and those affiliated with the Kenaitze Indian tribe were under represented in the sample. I therefore undertook a more purposeful sampling strategy to ensure adequate representation among the

distribution of the participants. I sought out participants that matched the criteria that I saw were under represented in the sample.

The in-depth interview style is similar to that of a conversation. This style is more intimate than most, and requires more talk on the part of the interviewer than other models (Johnson, 2002). Ideally, in-depth interviews are to occur in multiple installations. The initial research design was intended to be two 60-minute interviews. After a week of participating in the Institute it became clear that participants had little free time, and our design would be unfeasible with the desired sample size. The interview was then restructured so that it would be a single interval of 30-90 minutes.

The questions (see *Appendix*) were developed using a three-phase phenomenological model as described by Seidman (1991) based on Dolbeare and Schuman (in Schuman, 1982). The first phase is characterized as a focused life history. Questions centered on their language history: their experiences learning, hearing and interacting with any languages over the course of their lives. The second phase focused on the details of their experience in learning Dena'ina. The third and final phase asked participants to reflect on the meaning of their experiences and on the role of language in their lives, and in their community. What was essential in this design was using participant answers to build more personal questions to carryout comfortable dialogue. Bell kept a detailed audit trail (see Guba & Lincoln 1985) that summarized initial reactions to interviews and documented the ways in which she adjusted the interview protocol with each respondent.

The first 12 of 19 interviews were conducted during the institute. Most interviews were conducted in an empty classroom, others were completed at the housing complex

in the library. The next six interviews were conducted on a second trip to Kenai one month after the institute and were held in respondent's offices at the Tribe's headquarters. The final two interviews were conducted by phone, six weeks after the institute.

This work has taught me many lessons, some I am less proud of than others. Interviews 2-6 suffered a technical difficulty and were not recorded. I realized this at the end of the institute's second week. I then began extending the summaries that I had written in my research journal to create summaries of each interview. I informed the participants of my error with the sincerest of apologies, and then had them review and approve my summary. We then re-recorded the questions from phase three only. Following the institute, interview tapes were transcribed and-- pursuant to the IRB regulations-- names and distinguishing features (children's names, etc) were removed from transcripts.

Admittedly, interviews are not a neutral tool of inquiry. We are aware that participants' responses were affected by their social relationship to Bell and the qualities she may represent as a White female academic employed by the University of Alaska Fairbanks. Responses in interviews are not thought of here as accurate portrayals of the 'real' but rather as context-specific structured stories (see Silverman, 2000). Nevertheless, it is important to note that we are not subscribing to radical constructionist beliefs that contend that no 'reality' can be achieved in interviewing; therefore they are unable to teach us anything about the social world. The approach taken to interview methodology here is interactionist (see Denzin, 1989 for a complete discussion of symbolic interactionism in interviews). That is to say that people construct meaningful

worlds through interactions. While the interview itself is an interaction, it is constructed based on other constructions the participant has lived, and therefore we can learn something about the social world beyond the actual interview interaction (Miller & Glasner, 1997).

The purpose of most qualitative interviews is to derive interpretations, not facts or laws, from respondent talk (Warren, 2002). To arrive at the possible interpretations, the data was analyzed using an inductive process of coding. This implies that codes were not predetermined, but rather they emerged from the data. Data was then analyzed for themes, patterns, paradoxes and contradictions. The interview data was cross-analyzed (and re-analyzed) with historical data²⁴, and observational data to generate new ideas and a richer interpretation of the experiences of the participants.

All data, interview transcripts, field notes, the audit trail and historical documents were entered into the qualitative software program *Atlas Ti*. The primary function of this program for us was data management. There have been some concerns raised regarding the use of such software as critics argue that it forces certain methodologies, namely grounded theory, on the researcher (see Kelle, 1997; Lonkila, 1995 for full discussion). A review of other literature (Weitzman, 2003; Coffey & Atkinson, 1996) highlights that although some of the software has been designed with the grounded theory methodology in mind, the researcher is still able to manipulate them in other ways.

²⁴ Historical information was collected from both Alaska Native (Kalifornski, 1991; Leggett, 2005; Peter & Boraas, 1986) and Western sources (Boraas, 2002; Fall & Kari, 2003; Osgoode, 1937).

Analysis

Mismatched goals

The study revealed incongruences between the grant's stated goals (see *Table 3a*, p.21) and participant goals. The grant assumed a program audience of educators and future educators. In reality, only 35% of Institute participants can be formally categorized as educators or future educators. None of these professionals work in public schools. They are either Head Start staff or are in an educational role within KIT. Two participants categorized as future educators are working towards degrees in Early Childhood Education.

The acquisition of degrees, certifications and endorsements leading to employment mobility was also a key component of grant goals. While more than half of DLI participants (62% 16/26) had degrees in progress (ranging from Associates to Master's level work),²⁵ few (4/26 or 15%) required additional degrees or certification to gain employment or to maintain existing employment. Further, few expressed degree completion as a primary or even a secondary goal behind their participation in the program.

Participant goals in attending the DLI

If DLI participants aren't primarily interested in degree completion, what then are their core goals in attending the Institute? Responses to this question were unique to each participant; however goals primarily clustered into four categories: fluency, literacy, cultural knowledge, and community building. More important than these four stated goals

²⁵ As the target audiences under the original grant proposal were teachers and teacher's aides, outcomes assessment was to be measured by the number of education and Dena'ina-related degrees or certificates awarded to Institute participants. While many participants were pursuing Dena'ina-related topics (e.g., Anthropology and Alaska History), only a third (31% 5/16) were in education related programs.

were the ways in which these goals connected to overarching themes of visibility, healing and resistance (see *Figure 3c*). We will now explore how the connections between the stated goals and the overarching themes of visibility, healing and resistance outweigh quantifiable outcomes that are often associated with programs funded through federal grant monies.

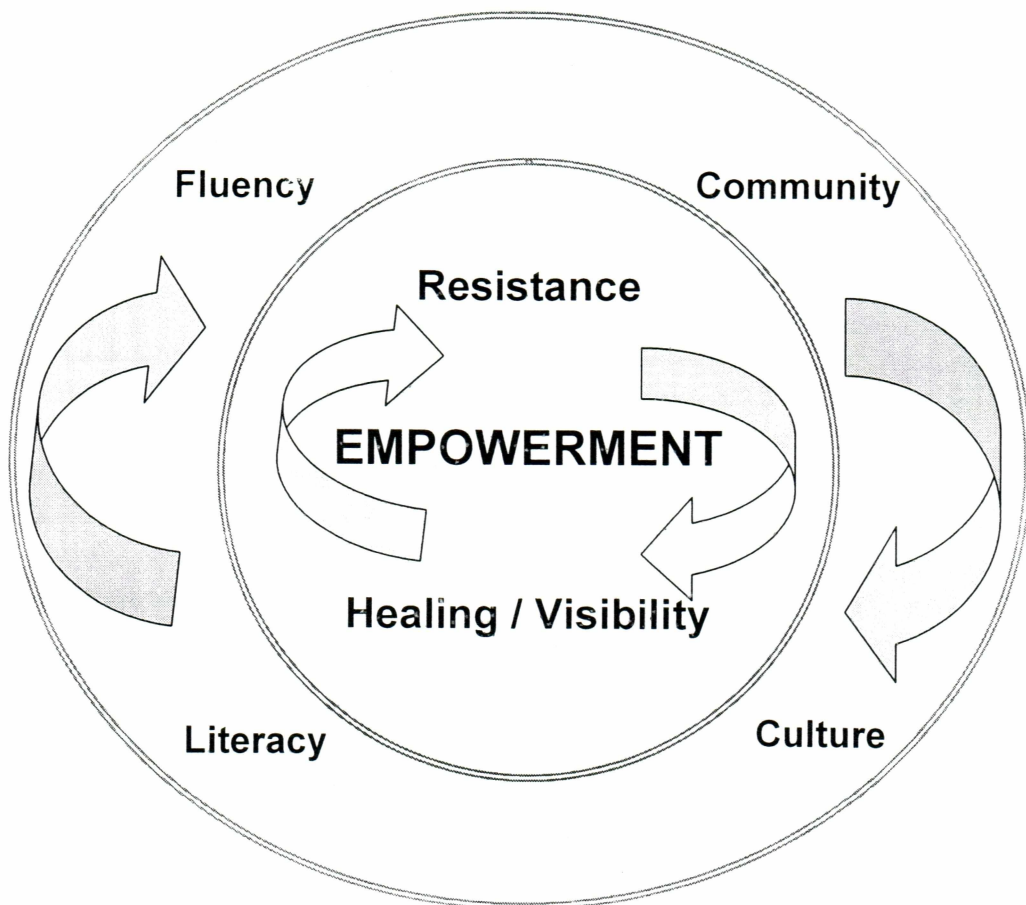


Figure 3c: Interconnections of DLI Participant Goals

Figure 3c illustrates that the central themes of **visibility** and **healing/resistance** are interconnected forms of, and tools for, **empowerment**. Visibility and healing/resistance form a singular organic whole, each reinforcing the other and acting together to build the

central theme of empowerment at the center of the circle. The arrows within the circle represent the relationship between these concepts, each relying on the other to materialize and expand. Thus, increased group and individual visibility is a sign of resistance, is central to a healing process, and leads to greater group and individual empowerment. In turn, increased resistance allows for greater Dena'ina visibility and even greater empowerment. The process is recursive and unending.

The outer circle represents the group and individual goals identified in the study. Although identified and dealt with in this study as discrete goals, **fluency**, **community**, **literacy** and **culture** are represented here as an interrelated whole represented by the outer circle. The arrows indicate movement within the outer circle. This movement indicates both interaction between ostensibly discrete goals, and a reinforcement of the movement within the inner circle. Thus, the goals of fluency, community, literacy and culture are seen here to reinforce the process of empowerment represented by the inner circle. This process is also recursive and unending.

Defining terms and relationships

Before moving into a discussion of how the four goals connected to the central themes, it may be useful at this juncture to clarify how we intend the terms visibility, healing, resistance and empowerment to be understood for the purposes of this work.

Resistance, according to Aboriginal Canadian scholar Angelina Weenie (2000), involves “unlearning what we [Aboriginal peoples] have been taught about ourselves and learning to value ourselves” (p.75). Resistance ultimately assists in **healing**: the restoration to

spiritual wholeness. **Visibility** is the act of “choosing²⁶” to accentuate a Dena’ina identity both individually and collectively. What constitutes an ethnic identity, and the relationship between language and identity is cause for much debate (Fishman, 2001; Iseke-Barnes, 2004). Definitions of ethnic identity can range from primordial or essentialist ideas of identity as an inherited or fixed quality (see Gumpłowicz, 1909) to a constructivist notion of ethnicity as an “imagined community” (Anderson, 1991). Contemporary social theories tend to disqualify essentialist definitions of ethnic identity; however Indigenous scholars such as Lattas (1993) and Iseke-Barnes (2004) argue that to deny an Aboriginal [or Indigenous] identity is to further stifle Aboriginal forms of resistance and self-empowerment. Bannerjee (2000) draws upon Lattas (1993) and Spivak (1988) (as in Iseke-Barnes 2004) to highlight that,

[R]esistance movements often strategically deploy essentialist themes culturally and politically, and this form of strategic essentialism can play an empowering role in identity politics and in articulating forms of resistance. (p.10)

This accepted, we are still not satisfied with adhering to an essentialist notion of ethnicity. We agree with Skutnabb-Kangas (1990) who suggests that this way of defining ethnicity is not “theoretically profitable” (p.92). She argues that “the human right to self-definition makes sense only when the parties are equal” (p.93). We align our definition to hers and suggest that ethnicity is a socially constructed relation with others: a relation that is not decided on by one group alone, but rather “is negotiated...and needs validation from both parties to exist” (p.92). This framework allows for the “power

²⁶ The idea of choice is problematic. Choices are generally constrained by the social setting and are maintained through unequal power relations. Therefore individuals in a society may only be “choosing” from a limited set of possibilities dictated by their standing in the social order. (The works Gramsci 1971, and Foucault, 1972, 1980b highlight this notion in detail).

relationships between the parties in the definition process become a primary object of study as opposed to just one of the parties, mostly the dominated one, being studied" (p.92). Renegotiating an ethnic identity so that it is more visible is a sign of power relations being renegotiated in a social space. Language is a powerful means of expressing, cultivating and maintaining ethnic identities for Indigenous peoples (Iseke-Barnes, 2004; McCarty & Zepeda, 1999). Learning the Dena'ina language is a symbolic acceptance of a Dena'ina identity that serves to renegotiate power relationships with the dominant culture and enables participants to heal from experiences related to 'hiding' their Dena'ianess. Learning Dena'ina helps to reverse the sense of imposed invisibility on DP group members by the dominant culture. The term **EMPOWERMENT** appears in the center of the diagram in *Figure 3c*. Empowerment here draws upon the Foucaultian concept of power. "Power is not a thing or quantity we possess or lose, but a relation of struggle" (Belsey on Foucault, 2002, p.55). The search for "knowledge" is also an expression of a will to power over other people. "For Foucault, knowledge is always a form of power" (Macey, 2001, p.134). In acquiring Dena'ina language "knowledge" (either spoken, written, or linguistic) participants acquire an audible or visible sign that demonstrates that a) the forces of dominance failed and b) the speaker/reader/'knower" knows something the dominant culture-bearer does not know. This 'knowledge' becomes privileged thereby empowering the "knowers".

Setting the stage for visibility, healing and resistance

The themes visibility, healing and resistance imply that individuals and the collective group on many levels feel invisible, repressed or oppressed. Interview data revealed the ways in which these feelings were constructed through the participants' personal

histories. Many DP participants grew up believing that being Dena'ina was not something to be proud of. As such, they rendered their 'Dena'ina-ness' invisible either consciously or sub consciously

Two members of the DP group grew up unaware of their Dena'ina heritage:

TT²⁷: It was around Thanksgiving time and we were at pre-school and we had made--like, a little baby jar of cranberry sauce or something and took it to my grandma's house and gave it to her and said, "Grandma, Grandma, here's this--you know, cranberry sauce," and I said, "and guess what, we dressed up as Indians." Well, she looks at me and she says, "you are an Indian," and I kind of stopped and--you know, for some reason that sticks out in my mind. It was like, "oh, really?" I didn't know. (05/30/05)

FF: [I wasn't] even like ashamed that I was Native, it was like beyond that. I suppressed it, you know, it was like in the very back back back of my brain, you know, I would have to think about it if someone asked me if I was [Dena'ina] cause I just didn't even want to know, I had no idea. (05/04/06)

Other participants were aware of their heritage, however were taught to render their Dena'inaness invisible in order to integrate socially. Ethnically exogamous²⁸ marriages facilitated this invisibility (through fair skin, Scandanavian last names etc.)

YY: [My grandmother] rejoiced when her daughter was born with blond hair and blue eyes; and I was her first grandchild and she was happy to see the blond hair

²⁷ To maintain the anonymity of participants, names are substituted with double letter combinations that make no reference to the participants name (e.g. AA) The code LB represents the interviewer Lindsay Bell. The elipse marks some portion of speech omitted, either a hesitation marker such as "um" or a repetition. Items that appear in square brackets are added by the authors for clarity. The dates following the passages indicate the date of interview. Extended pauses are indicated by a hard return.

²⁸ It should be noted that pre-contact Dena'ina were moiety exogamous (Boraas, 2006)

and blue eyes...that's always been something that's really bothered me, you know, that you couldn't rejoice in the fact that your child looked Dena'ina...It's more important--you know, it would be better and be more accepted if you didn't look like you were Indian. (06/06/05)

LB: For the school years? To your peers, would they know you were Native?

CC: Umm... if I told them.

LB: Did you choose to tell many people at that age?

CC: No. (06/07/05)

Through these experiences some participants began to develop a sense of shame associated with being Alaska Native:

CC: There was this underlying, something, from my other [non-Native] grandparents about the Native side [of the family] and um although, they had lots of friends that were Native, it was always, sometimes inadvertently but, you know, "We're Better" you know because we are not [Native]. (06/07/05)

Throughout the subsequent pages, we will show how learning Dena'ina is a mode of resistance that seeks to heal some learners from previous experiences of forced invisibility.

CC: It has been um healing in ways, probably in the same way I could not express shame, in spending time with the elders and understanding, it helps to teach me who I am and why I am the way I am and the awareness of a different way of thinking... it is an identity that is very important. We need to know who we are so we are not ashamed of who we are...I don't know if I am making very much sense. There is so much in the language that it has been a very healing

thing for me learning the language and I feel like some part of me...sorry
(crying)(06/07/05)

Visibility, healing and resistance: Making connections

In looking at the discourse that surrounded respondent talk about their goals in attending the DLI it became clear that stated participant goals were not “stand alone.” As illustrated in *Figure 3c*, not only with each other, but also to larger, broader goals of visibility, healing and resistance. It is essential for us to emphasize and discuss the connections rather than the goals in isolation in order to fully illustrate the social parameters and conditions of the leaning space.

1) Moving towards fluency

The literature on language revitalization often depends on *language use* as a means to mark identity and to function as a mechanism for boundary maintenance in a language contact situation (see Paulston 1994). What the literature has failed to consider is the prospect that *language learning* can also be used to serve the needs of an ethnic movement. The assumption has always been that achieving fluency in the Native language is the only means to achieve goals related to ethnic identity marking. However, we see here, by the ways in which fluency is discussed, that the *process* of learning Native languages is as an effective way of increasing one's sense of **visibility** as a Dena'ina. Learning, and making space for future generations to learn, Dena'ina is a form of **resistance** in that it operates against traditional colonizing views of Native languages as worthless, unnecessary objects to be “blotted out”.²⁹ As descendants of those persecuted by schools for the use Native

²⁹ The term “blotted out” appears in the 1868 Peace commission report which outlined strategies for assimilating Native peoples to American culture including replacing Native languages with English. (See Alton, 1998).

languages, DLI participants (of the DP group) are reclaiming their rights to learn their language.

Achieving *Fluency* was a goal stated most frequently by DP group members (DP= 8/10, NN=2/7, AKND =0/4³⁰) however, it was generally discussed with hesitancy,

LB: do you hope to become fluent in Dena'ina?

DD: yes, it depends on what I end up doing. (07/05/05)

CC:[In the]beginning I wasn't so passionate about it, I guess, and now I feel like I really want to attain fluency (07/04/05)

LB: [W]ould like to become a fluent speaker, and would you like your children to be speakers as well?

CC: Yes, and they want to be too, and my husband does too XXX³¹ It does seem impossible in a lot ways (07/06/05)

The goal of 'future fluency' was discussed more securely by many respondents. 'Future fluency' refers to participants expressing the goal that their children, grandchildren or other Dena'ina children will be able to speak the language.

GG: My personal goal, I would like to see my son become fluent. (06/07/05)

LB:And when you say bring it back alive, what do you mean? ...

LL: Well, hopefully it becomes all that in the future...for me right now I have two grandchildren that are in Head Start. One's three and one's five and the last time we made a road trip the five-year-old was in the back of the seat and she's

³⁰ While no AKND made reference to achieving fluency in Dena'ina, two of the four people interviewed expressed a desire to become proficient in their own Native languages. One of the two AKND interested in attaining fluency in their own Native Language was a semi fluent Yup'ik speaker. The other, an Ahtna learner, had attended the DLI to acquire skills in Dena'ina as a means of improving her Ahtna. Dena'ina and Ahtna are neighboring Athabascan languages that share many structural similarities.

³¹ XXX represents portions of the tape that were inaudible for the purposes of transcription.

singing a song and half of it was in Dena'ina and half of it was in English, so that's what I mean about--you know, the future and--and maybe eventually it'll all go into all that, into the classrooms and home lives and to the movies and the grocery store. (06/06/05)

Many participants felt that if they could achieve 'some' of the language, future generations may be able to acquire the 'whole' language. In this way the adults become the cultural brokers vis-à-vis the language. Further, by passing on the expectation of fluency to future generations, they extend the timeline available for full restoration of the language. More notably, the hesitancy to express a desire for fluency and the emphasis laid on future fluency supports our claim that the process of "getting back" the language outweighs actual desire for full acquisition of the language. Here is where we are able to connect the goal of fluency to the broader theme of **healing** (as represented in *Figure 3c*). Language learning, like healing, is a journey or a process while fluency is an end product. Many of the learners extended the healing benefits of language learning to other generations. Some participants felt that having a forum for elders to gather and share their language was a means to communicate the value of the language. Many participants felt as though the elders' knowledge of language has not been sufficiently valued in the past. The DLI is a formal way of recognizing their knowledge.

The Head Start staff members (5/24 participants) were attending the DLI in order to gain enough proficiency as to be able to integrate Dena'ina language into their curriculum. This group expressed a true commitment to including language programming into their already busy classroom lives. This group's intentions were generally not to achieve full fluency, but rather to offer enough language to the children in their program

so that the Dena'ina children may have a strong sense of identity. A "sense of identity" was perceived as crucial for future success in schooling. These thoughts were echoed by Tribal staff members.

Three KIT staff members had attended youth programs as children. These programs included drum groups, Native youth Olympics and a junior archeologist club camp. These participants connected these positive experiences to the formation of a positive self-image. The more salient outcomes of these programs for these KIT staff members were not knowledge or skills gained, but rather a "sense of identity" that has remained with them and continues to strengthen as they work towards fluency while attending the DLI. "Sense of identity" is difficult to quantify and therefore its incorporation into western grant proposals is problematic.

2) *Literacy*

As *Figure 3c* shows, literacy, like moving towards fluency, seeks to facilitate **visibility**. It does so in three ways. First, literacy facilitates the visibility of the lesser used dialects. As previously mentioned, three of the four remaining dialects have fewer than 6 remaining speakers. Literacy allows these dialects to persist. Many DLI attendees, particularly Dena'ina participants, said being able to read and write Dena'ina was a primary goal. Developing literacy was most important for those Dena'ina participants from Kenai and Anchorage. Both of these communities are highly urbanized with little or no access to fluent speakers of the regional dialect. Through reading and writing Dena'ina, students gain access to the language and its complex cognitive structures, even when elders/speakers are no longer available. Further, literacy is a means for these students to access otherwise inaccessible dialects. NN and AKND

participants were willing to learn the Inland dialect (the dialect with the most speakers), however, most Dena'ina participants felt that it was essential to learn the particular dialect of their ancestry.

TT: You know, if I can read it and write it in 20 years from now, I'd be happy with it and that's still something that's in the back of my mind. I still--that's a goal of mine, is to be able to read and write our language... (05/30/05)

GG: [Last year I was] frustrated because I could not learn enough and...there are not Kenai dialect speaking elders.... to me its very painful when somebody says there isn't a difference [between the dialects], because there is a difference... Peter³² wouldn't have worked very hard on writing the Kenai dialect and getting as much stuff down if it didn't matter... (06/07/05)

The commitment to particular dialects³³ is often discouraged in language revitalization movements as there is a potential that the differences could divide resources and stifle progress. However, it is important that the Academy respect the wishes of the people to whom the language belongs and further to accept that some Dena'ina feel that their identity is not only rooted in the language, but also in the regional dialect³⁴. Secondly, literacy, in terms of text production, is a means of increasing group visibility. This was a stated goal by several DP group members. The presence of written Dena'ina is a sign to the larger community that the Dena'ina have a physical presence in the area.

³² Referring to Peter Kalifornski, Kalifornsky see Cultural Knowledge for more information.

³³ Sometimes referred to as *linguistic purism*.

³⁴ The underlying theme, of course, is the historical disparity between the Outer Inlet and Inland Dena'ina: a 70 year old from Nondalton does know the language but a 70 year old elder from Kenai does not (Boraas, 2006)

LB: Now, for you, when we talk about language revitalization...What would that look like?

TT: I guess to me what it would be is, there would be a constant flow of new publications in Dena'ina... (06/2505)

TT: ...its more than just the language. It's that it's in-that it has a presence,...[here] in Anchorage, that if I had a tourist from—who'd never been to Alaska— and if there is a place where I can show them where our language exists, it's a physical manifestation of it, whether it be a sign, whether it be some sort of accurate portrayal-just let it be known, I guess, that there is a presence of Dena'ina people in Anchorage and that there is some sort of visual representation of our people here. (25/06/05)

Thirdly, literacy allows for the development of curricular materials that can have a place in Western institutions like local schools and universities. These materials increase visibility and viability of the language while attempting to increase the number of language learners. Again, teaching the language to children is seen as essential to their development and as proud Dena'ina youth.

Materials production was a source of great pride for those involved in language programming. At a follow up language workshop in November 2005, DLI participants shared with the group various resources they had been working on after the institute ended. The time spent on sharing curricular materials (books, websites, interactive maps) outweighed the time spent on language learning. Materials creation is one some levels a form of **resistance** as it canonizes the language in forms that are valued by the dominant culture. It pushes dominant genres/artifacts (websites, curriculum, children's

books) to include Native languages as legitimate and as capable of expressing contemporary thoughts.

3) *Cultural Knowledge*

Reclaiming cultural knowledge is a fundamental aspect to deconstructing ideas of the superiority of Western knowledge. This process of deconstruction is an essential element of **resistance** movements among colonized peoples (Weenie, 2000). Access to cultural knowledge was the most frequently expressed goal among all cross sections of the interviewed participants.

TT: I want to know the language to understand it and to understand the culture and I guess I'm not learning the language just so I can know another language...(05/30/05)

YY: ...in learning our language, we learn about where we are. (06/06/05)

ZZ: [Dena'ina teaches us about] different attitudes to the world around you. One of them that's really easy to see is--you know, attitudes towards animals and nature. You know, the English language isn't going to convey that in the way that Dena'ina can. (06/05/05)

VV: [T]here's more to be passed on here, especially culturally. There's something about this language...things can't always be translated into English in the same way that they are in Dena'ina. A lot of it has to do with the outdoors...this whole area is so rich and beautiful with the outdoors and... nature and all the different ways that they used to do things. I think that's part of why the language was, and still is, so important for me to learn and to understand better

how they viewed the world and how we, too, can hopefully learn to view the world that way and protect what's here. (06/06/05)

TT: [T]here's a place out--out towards Earthquake Park--and the reason they call it Earthquake Park is, the whole area kind of--it was just completely screwed up after the earthquake... I don't know the Dena'ina name right at the moment, but what it translates out to is 'no good land', so... they knew exactly that this isn't a place you want to be building your home. They knew that this wasn't good ground...(06/25/05)

These quotes illustrate that cultural knowledge embodies an understanding of the local natural world and provides an insight into the Dena'ina worldview.³⁵ Participants described how cultural knowledge can be learned both through speaking the language and through understanding its linguistic features. It is evident from these comments that the loss of the Dena'ina language in the Kenai area has led participants to acknowledge the cultural shift that has taken place. Participation in the DLI for many learners is equated with working to reverse both language and cultural shift. The DLI is seen as an institutional context³⁶ ways of knowing that have previously been "othered" are learned about and valued. Language, for DLI participants is a means for accessing cultural knowledge. The interest and enthusiasm for cultural activities throughout the institute was overwhelming. Participants most memorable moments surrounded cultural activities that often did not involve language. Cultural knowledge contributes to a sense of ethnic pride in the same way language learning does. If language learning, and language use are seen as effective identity markers, then we should also include learning and using

³⁵ The concept of world view is defined by Kawagely (1990) in *Yupik Worldview*.

³⁶ There are other contexts working to this end, specifically at the Kenai River Campus of the University of Alaska Anchorage.

cultural knowledges as a means to increase individual and group **visibility**. The relationship between these two concepts, language and culture, is seen as impenetrable.

TT: Well, in a nutshell, language and culture--you can't separate the two, in my opinion. (05/30/05)

4) Community Building...a family of choice

Resistance is as much a collective process as it is an individual process. Participants from all sub groups felt it was beneficial to develop a support network of Dena'ina learners. Many felt that the building of a close knit group of Dena'ina learners was the best outcome of the DLI. At the follow up language workshop in November 2005, many returning participants noted they were happy to be among "family" again. The choice of the term "family" to refer to this new, emerging support network seems significant to the authors. All DP members have monolingual English speaking parents. Many expressed that their parents do not overtly support their language efforts³⁷.

TT: [T]here's not a lot of external--really encouragement from--you know, my mom... she never came out and said--"you know, [TT], I think that you need to learn our language" or that "this is something that's important." (05/30/05)

OO: [My mom] was proud of what I always accomplished... She just didn't know the language, so it--it didn't--it didn't really matter to her, I don't think. (06/04/05)

By building a family of choice, a family of learners and elder speakers, this new support network assists in **healing** from parental disinterest in language achievements

³⁷ Parental indifference to Native language learning could possibly be a result of negative past experiences associated with the language (See Dauenhauer and Dauenhauer, 1998) or with formal education (see Alton, 1998)

while at the same time may operate to facilitate continued language learning for DP group members.

For the Head Start staff, the DLI was a forum for language learning as well as a means of becoming closer to KIT members employed at the Tribal office. The head of the Department of Culture and Education stated:

YY: [A]s the tribe has grown, there have been artificial boundaries that were created and there was a cultural department and the Head Start and now we've got a language staff and there was not the interplay between those departments like there should be... and so I just wanted to take that artificial boundary out and I feel that learning together is the best way to remove those things... and it was wonderful. I mean, when I walked in [to the DLI] I saw Head Start staff and cultural staff working together with language staff. I mean, it's phenomenal.

(06/06/05)

Head Start staff expressed that their participation had made them feel supported by their employer and fellow employees from KIT's head office. They felt that in attending the DLI it was clear that KIT was committed to integrating language and culture into the Head Start curriculum. Head Start staff felt as though the personal connections established at the DLI would facilitate better language programming at the Head Start through improved sharing of resources and skills.

exposed to key themes in the RLS literature, the community will be better prepared to undertake language planning in their various roles and capacities.

Broader implications

Our program, like many grant funded endeavors, was built upon “measurable outcomes”: increase Dena’ina fluency, certify X number of language teachers etc. A look at the demographics of who attended the institute revealed that our target audience of future educators was not in fact the ones who had become interested in the program. DLI enrollment increased each year and, overall, the program is seen as “successful” in the eyes of the community. Nevertheless, the funding agency has deemed the grant a “failure” and funding has been discontinued. The issue presented here parallels a form of “funding tyranny” in the No Child Left Behind mind-set, that all goals must be incremental and measurable. This in itself is directly contrary to Dena’ina thought that does not compartmentalize life into the incremental and measurable (Boraas, 2006). Naturally, funding based on such a mind set would fail, and should fail, if the Dena’ina are to achieve overarching goals of visibility, healing and resistance.

Our study illustrates how broader socio-emotional goals bring depth and meaning to the learning experiences of DLI participants. However, these types of non-quantifiable goals are excluded from most grant funds distributed through the United States Department of Education. The question then becomes, in the reality of product-oriented grant proposals, how can process-oriented goals like those expressed by the Dena’ina community be addressed? Can they be addressed? Who can best address them? Our study can not answer any one of these questions; however we can conclude that in examining the complexities of Native language teaching in institutional contexts

we can move towards a changed relationship between institution and community. With a heightened awareness of issues of empowerment, the institution is prompted to become more critical of our participation in language renewal efforts. We will need to look closely at the ideologies driving our practice to assess the ways in which we may be hindering community goals of empowerment. The negotiations between institution-community-funding agency are ongoing. In being critical of our practice and by committing to putting community needs first we are in a better position to contribute positively to Native language efforts.

CHAPTER 4

ADVENTURES IN RECURSIVE RESEARCH: IT'S ALWAYS IDEOLOGICAL¹

Abstract

This paper traces the recursive process of research as I try to *identify* ideologies held by adult learners of Dena'ina Athabascan. It demonstrates the evolution of my understanding of the term *ideology* and its importance in the educational setting of a university-run Native language program: the Dena'ina Language Institute. The paper illuminates the difficulties in addressing the complex issue of *ideology* and makes methodological recommendations for future research. Drawing on two selected interviews, the paper explores two applications of a similar ideology: *difference as the basis for identity*. The paper then looks at the role of the institution in the co-authoring of *both* ideological stances. The discussion here intends to show how institutional involvement in language programming is never neutral and is always ideological. This paper suggests that ideological critique is essential in achieving the goals for empowerment outlined by the community; however for ideological critique to be truly transformative it should be continually executed by both institution and community alike.

¹ Bell, L.A. (2006). Paper prepared for submission to *Qualitative Inquiry*.

Introduction

Qualitative research, undertaken within 'critical' frameworks, attempts to address various levels of social struggle within all aspects of the research design, implementation and analysis. Bourdieu² (*Masculine Domination*, 2001) reminds us that the purpose of such research is neither to 'solve' social problems once and for all nor is it to 'sort out' the theoretical problem. The goal of sociological research is to "strive to understand and demonstrate the social, historical, economic and political conditions that lead to the establishment of structures of power, and struggles for symbolic power in a given social context" (Webb, Schirato & Danaher, 2002, p.69-70). Research then becomes "*an endless labor, endlessly recommenced*" (Bourdieu, 2001, p.110 my emphasis). Research may allow us to make some useful recommendations to address a social problem; however recommendations need to be continuously re-evaluated in order for to optimize their efficacy. This paper illustrates the *endlessness* of the research process.

The original intent of this research was to identify ideologies of language held by adult learners attending the 2005 Dena'ina Language Institute (DLI). I wanted to examine if/ how ideologies of DLI participants were operating in conflict (or in concert) with institutional ideologies for the purposes of reshaping university praxis to reflect participant beliefs about language and learning. The outcomes for the research have departed from the initial intentions and this paper intends to trace the path of this departure. The recursive nature of qualitative research allowed my perceptions of *ideology* to evolve throughout the process of my Master's work. My changing understanding of three key

² Bourdieu is not generally associated with 'critical theorists' rather he is associated with first the field of Sociology, and second with French post-structuralism, however, with respect to questions of research, there is much overlap between the movements.

questions lay the framework for the discussion here: What are ideologies? Where do you *find* ideologies? How do you “compare” ideologies? Drawing on fieldwork and interviews conducted at the 2005 DLI I will illustrate some of the complexities of *researching* ideology.

Preparing for Departure: Background & Context

Prior to the discussion it may be appropriate to provide some background and context to the work. This discussion draws upon two semi-structured, in-depth interviews with adults learning their heritage language: Dena'ina Athabascan. The Dena'ina are one of eleven Athabascan groups in Alaska. Located in the south central region of the state, Dena'ina territory extends inland on both sides of the Cook Inlet (see *Figure 4a*). The Dena'ina lead a variety of lifestyles ranging from subsistence hunting and fishing in remote villages, like Nondalton and Lime Village, to running multi-million dollar businesses in urban centers, like Anchorage and Kenai. While it is estimated that there are around 900 Dena'ina living in Alaska, fewer than 75 are Dena'ina speakers (Krauss, 1997). Fluent speakers that remain are generally over 60 and/or past child bearing age thereby placing the Dena'ina language at stage seven or eight on Fishman's (1991) Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (GIDS)³.

The data was gathered during a three-week summer institute held in the Dena'ina community of Kenai, Alaska. The Dena'ina Language Institute (DLI) brought

³ In *Reversing Language Shift* (1991) Fishman outlines a scale used to measure “the sociolinguistic disruption” of language communities or networks (p.87). The typology uses the numbers 1-8. A higher the GIDS rating reveals greater language shift, and lower intergenerational continuity.

together 26 adult learners from various ethnic backgrounds⁴ and 11 fluent speaking Dena'ina elders⁵. The Dena'ina Language Institute (DLI) is funded through the United States Department of Education Office of English Language Acquisition (formerly the Office of Bilingual Education and Multilingual Affairs) and is part of a larger federally funded project to provide training to potential language teachers⁶ involved in Dena'ina, Tanacross, and Upper Tanana language programming.

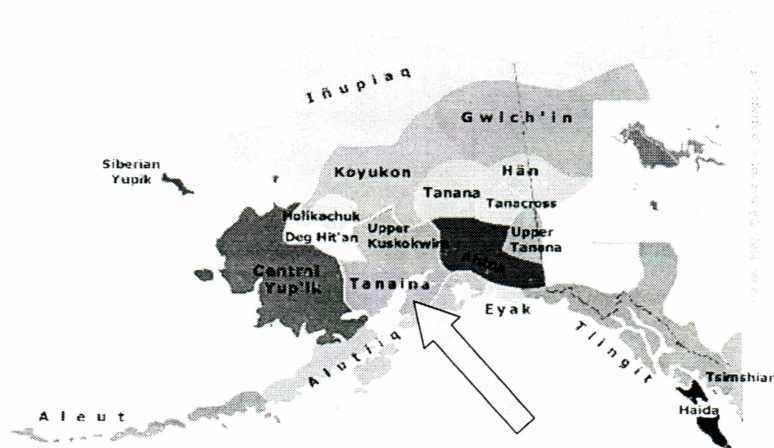


Figure 4a: Map of Native Peoples and Languages of Alaska (Krauss, 1982)

⁴ Participants who are themselves Dena'ina (referred to as Dena'ina Participants, or DP) made up the largest sub-group (DP = 46%, 12/26), followed by two equally represented groups: Non-Natives (referred to as Non-Natives, or NN = 27%, 7/26) and Alaska Natives that are not themselves Dena'ina (including Yup'ik, Aleut, and Ahtna Athabascan individuals, referred to collectively as Alaska Native non-Dena'ina, or AKND = 27% 7/26).

⁵ Dena'ina has five mutually intelligible, regional dialects: Upper Inlet, Seldovia, Outer Inlet, Iliamna and Inland. The primary differences between the dialects are lexical. The five dialects have experienced language shift at varying speeds. The Seldovia dialect is no longer spoken by anyone. The Kenai dialect has experienced the second greatest shift and at present there is but one fluent speaker, F. Malamoff, who for health reasons does not attend the DLI. Elders in attendance are speakers of the remaining three dialects and are from areas outside of Kenai. They are very generous to leave their homes and families for three weeks in order to assist with language learning. Their support and participation is invaluable.

⁶ The grant assumed a program audience of educators and future educators. In reality, only 35% of Institute participants can be formally categorized as educators or future educators. None of these professionals work in public schools. They are either Head Start staff or are in an educational role within KIT. Two participants categorized as future educators are working towards degrees in Early Childhood Education.

The full set of data consists of 19 interviews collected to reflect the ethnic diversity in institute attendance. However, this portion of the study makes use of only two interviews with Dena'ina participants. Both participants live in urban centers of Alaska and are between the ages of 20-30. One participant is a male, the other female. They are both "well educated" by Western standards. Each has a high school diploma and has completed coursework towards a bachelor's degree.

Where did this Begin?

The discussion presented here arose from a research project that intended to do two things. First, the study intended to identify goals among adults learning Dena'ina Athabascan through the 2005 Dena'ina Summer Language Institute⁷. The purpose of this research was to contrast learner goals with stated grant goals in order to assist in the development of future programming offered by the University of Alaska Fairbanks. The idea was to collect data that would assist in putting community goals ahead of funding agency goals. This first task was accomplished by conducting 19 semi-structured in-depth interviews with adult Dena'ina learners. Analysis of the interviews revealed that goals of attendees clustered into four categories: fluency, literacy, cultural knowledge, and community building. More important than these four stated goals were the ways in which these goals connected to overarching themes of visibility, healing and resistance. The research suggests that these themes are interconnected forms of, and tools for, **empowerment**. (see Chapter three).

⁷The DLI is a grant funded (Genage' Career Ladder for Athabascan Teachers, U.S. Department of Education grant #T195E010045) project set up to improve the quality of Dena'ina language programming in schools and train and provide access to degree programs for would-be language teachers. The DLI is a three week summer intensive program that offers students a chance to earn University credit in Dena'ina and other courses related to language revitalization. For a more ethnographic account of the institute (see Chapter three)

The first intention of the research—identify learner goals and compare them to institutional goals as represented in the grant proposal—was achieved using fairly simple means: asking participants directly, “what are your goals in attending the DLI?”. Looking at participant responses and the discourse that framed their goals, the researchers were able to arrive at possible conclusions and make suggestions to improve language programming for the subsequent year. The second intention, identify learner ideologies of language and compare them to institutional ideologies proved to be a much more complicated matter.

What is Ideology? An Evolving Definition...

When I initially designed this study I held a fairly simple understanding of the term *ideology*. I believed ideology to be the collective of “unconscious assumptions that come to be seen as common sense” (Tollefson, 1991, p.10). While working through the process of research, my definition evolved to be much more complicated. I realized that in designing the research I had clearly laid out the WHY of ideology but had a limited understanding of the WHAT.

Why ideology?

My interest in *ideology* was grounded in my understanding that ideologies are central to the reproduction of unequal relations in a given society. I subscribed the Gramscian (1971) notion that, it is on the level of ideologies that revolutions are won or lost. Gramsci’s concept of hegemony, the praxis of ideology, had been extremely useful to me as a critical educator reflecting on my own practices as a white teacher in a Canadian Aboriginal village. Gramsci’s hegemony posits that it is through the normalization of dominant discourses, values, and morals that the current social

exploring ideology is that conflicting ideas about *WHAT are ideologies* is in fact representative of a much larger philosophical discussion of the link between the material world and the mind (see Hawkes, 1996) . As such, the term has held multiple meanings since its inception in 1796 by French philosopher Destutt de Tracy. Originally, *Idéologie* was proposed as a science of ideas, intended to be a new branch of zoology. According to Destutt de Tracy and other empiricists of the time, ideas derived from physical sense perceptions (Macey, 2000, p.198) and could therefore be studied empirically.

From its empiricist roots, *ideology* morphs through both idealist and Marxist traditions. Both of these traditions depicted ideology as a *false consciousness*. While the idealists developed their ideas through theological critique (see Hegel's (1977) *Phenomenology*, Feuerbach's (1841) *Essence of Christianity*), Marx and Engels developed their arguments using economic explanations. (see Marx & Engels' (1937) *The German Ideology*).

Hegelians proposed that it is through philosophical critique that "Truth" can be achieved (enter critical theory), while Marxists suggest that the dominant ideology of a ruling class can only be transformed through a social revolution in which the division of the classes is abolished (Macey, 2000, p.198). Regardless of the differences between idealist and Marxist ideas of how and where ideologies can be produced or interrupted, both hold ideology as "mistaken thinking" (Hegel, 1977) or "phantoms of the brain" (Marx & Engels, 1937). Both schools imply that some type of Truth, or ideal consciousness/state can be achieved.

When I began my work, I subscribed to the notion that ideologies were the *false assumptions* people made about their social world. However attempts at initial analysis

of interview transcripts revealed that this notion was problematic. What was I looking for? Was I looking for places where participants were making “false” assumptions about language? Would saying that assumptions made by individuals or the institution are “wrong” serve my research intention of reshaping university practice to be more community centered? The answer seemed to be NO, so what then was I to do? I decided to look further into this increasingly complex term yet again.

The implied idea of an *ideal consciousness* (in opposition to a false consciousness) is the element of *ideology* that has been subject to much postmodernist/post-structuralist critique. Much of the work of Michel Foucault (1972, 1977, 1980a) suggests that an autonomous human essence does not exist. He illustrates through his work the ways in which the human essence is constructed, or “written on the body” through the use of discourses. Discourses shape the “truth effects” that guide our everyday actions. The term discourse is defined as ‘a group of statements in so far as they belong to the same ‘discursive formation’ (Foucault, 1977, p.117). Foucault’s ‘discursive formations’ are in some ways a new naming of *ideologies*.

Like Foucault, Pierre Bourdieu rejects the term ideology, but continues to discuss its functions through the use of his term habitus. Like Foucault’s discursive formations, Bourdieu’s habitus expresses the ways in which an individual becomes themselves (i.e. develops attitudes, beliefs and dispositions) on the one hand and the ways in which an individual engages in those practices on the other (Webb, Schirato & Danaher, 2002, xii).

From Foucault and Bourdieu I began to see ideologies as the forces that produce the real. For me, ideologies are now seen as a set of lived relations rather than a fixed

static point (or institution) that can be critiqued. Ideology is no longer thought of as something that simply affects our ideas. Ideology in the post-structuralist sense is something that happens to the totality of our existence (see Zizek *The Sublime of Ideology*, 1989). As ideology affects us and produces our realities, power relations are negotiated. What interests both Bourdieu and Foucault (particularly in his later work, see *Discipline and Punish* (1975) is not the naming of the *habitus* or *discursive formation* or *ideology* but rather the role of power their formation and reproduction.

Through their writing I was able to understand that I was not in search of the “mistaken thinking” among institution and individual. This would not serve my research intention (and, arguably, is not possible in the post-modern absence of “Truth”). What I was looking to explore was how ideologies affect experience. Their “trueness” or “falseness” is irrelevant. What I really wanted to know was how ideologies constrained and defined the learning experiences and expectations of Dena’ina learners. My research question “what are the ideologies of language held by DLI participants?” evolved into multiple questions: What are the social implications of the ideologies of language held by DLI participants? How do these underlying assumptions about language and its functions impact the ways in which participants performed their multiple roles as social actors? Who is scripting these performances? Who benefits from these performances?

My new questions in line, I realized the new connection between my WHY and my WHAT. I was interested in ideology because of issues of power. I wanted to explore how power was working, in a material sense, in the context of the DLI. My new questions would allow me to *identify how ideologies might be working*, rather than *identifying what*

I began to realize that although ideologies are evident in “texts”, we only begin to understand in what ways they work when discursive formations (what people say) intersect with non-discursive formations (what people do). The observational data collected for this study was not substantial enough to form an account of community language ideologies.

My attendance at the institute was a result of my graduate position at the Alaska Native Language Center¹³ (ANLC). I was attending not only to conduct research but also to act as coordinator. This meant I arranged travel and housing for visiting students and elders, and that I completed required university paperwork for course scheduling and enrollment. My role as the coordinator of the institute demanded much more of my time than anticipated. Between paperwork for course registration and solving day to day problems like arranging travel home for homesick elders, little time was left for me to observe the learning settings in a formal way. As such, my field notes were written at the end of the day and were not as substantial as I would have liked given my evolved research questions and intended method of analysis. For future research, I would recommend more extensive field observations in multiple social contexts to allow for a more in-depth understanding of how ideological assumptions guide individual and group behaviors and attitudes¹⁴.

¹³ The Alaska Native Language Center (ANLC) at the University of Alaska Fairbanks was established in 1972 as a center for research, documentation and promotion of Alaska's twenty Native languages.

¹⁴ There have been two recent examples of language attitudes/ideologies research that effectively make use of both interviews and observational data Wyman (2005) produced a thorough ethnographic account of Yup'ik youth culture and the promotion of the Yup'ik language. The combined methodology allows for a rich description of ideological assumptions about Yup'ik language held by Yup'ik youth. Tulloch (2005) looked at language attitudes among Inuit youth in

How do you “Compare” Ideologies when you can’t ‘Identify’ them?

So far I have shown you that ideologies are more complicated than I had originally planned for. I learned that the task isn’t to *identify* ideology per se, but rather to examine how it might be working. I have shown you that I lack sufficient data to *find* ideologies at work. Comparing ideologies seems to be impossible given the first two *false starts* summarized above. It is fair that you may be thinking that this work does not seem to be advancing in any one direction; it seems to be at a dead end. I assure you there is a path to be followed: although I must warn you in advance it is neither straight nor smooth.

Using two participant narratives, I will raise a discussion that suggests that neither community nor institutional ideologies are uniform: a two-way comparison of ideologies is too simplistic given the interconnectedness of institutions and individuals¹⁵. However, I would like to offer an illustration of the complexities of *comparing ideologies* by looking at two individuals who subscribe to the same ideology-- *difference as the basis for identity*-- in different ways with different social outcomes. The idea will not be to evaluate which is the *better* ideology, but rather I would like to raise questions about the possible role of the institution in co-authoring¹⁶ *both* positions. The discussion is intended to demonstrate that institutional presence in a community is never ‘neutral’. I

Nunavut and found that the addition of observational data was essential to fully understanding youth perspectives on language use.

¹⁵ I had neglected to consider that the ideologies of the institution and the ideologies of the community were not formed in mutual exclusion of each other. Most learners who attend the DLI have a bachelor's degree and attach significant symbolic capital to Western education. Further, faculty from the Alaska Native Language Center (ANLC) have been working with community members since the 1960's. The history of these relationships makes for a complicated web of seemingly congruent ideologies.

¹⁶ Foucault (1972) suggests that ideologies (discursive formations) never have one author.

will argue that faculty engagement in critical reflection about their impact (intended or not) on community ideologies is essential in a learning context such as the DLI given the community goals related to empowerment (see Chapter three). Regardless of one's field affiliation, we are all educators and therefore we impact the types of knowledge that are privileged in the learning environment. Finally, I suggest that the task of ideological critique be carried out not only by institution, but also by community.

'Difference' as the Basis of Identity: How Different does Different have to be?

Here I will contrast two narratives that subscribe on one level to the same ideology: *'difference' (linguistic and otherwise) as the basis of identity*. What constitutes *identity* varies across academic disciplines and personal belief systems (see Fishman, 1991). To come up with a concise definition of identity is beyond the scope of this paper. However, it is noteworthy to highlight that the literature on language rights and language revitalization generally infers a strong connection between language and identity (Warner, 1999; Whorf, 1956; Hinton 2001). McCarty and Zepeda (1999) explore the inextricable connection of land, language and people among Indigenous peoples of North America (specifically in the South Western regions of the United States). They note,

...[L]anguage represents experience with and knowledge of a place...language conveys a sense of places considered home. In its versatility and complexity, it is the language that is most capable of portraying events and places to children and grandchildren who have never experienced them. (p.207)

DLI participants emphasized their desire to learn language as a means of accessing cultural knowledge. Dena'ina cultural knowledge is seen as encoded within

the Dena'ina language. For DLI participants, a “strong sense of identity” is equated with understanding cultural practices from both past and present. Therefore, in learning the Dena'ina language, participants are securing a sense of identity for themselves and for future generations. This identity, particularly among urban Dena'ina, is perceived as ‘inherited’. It is based not on shared cultural practices but rather on difference from the dominant group. This essentialized definition of identity is significant given the interest in group/self empowerment. Bannerjee (2000) draws upon Lattas (1993) and Spivak (1988) (as in Iseke-Barnes, 2004) to highlight that,

[R]esistance movements often strategically deploy essentialist themes culturally and politically, and this form of strategic essentialism can play an empowering role in identity politics and in articulating forms of resistance (p.10)

The two interview excerpts explored below make use of an essentialized definition of identity. Both TT and JJs' narratives illustrate the ideology of '*difference*' as *the basis for identity*. However, their applications of the ideology are not synonymous, and in turn the social effects of their ideologies are disparate.

Both JJ and TT are Dena'ina living in urban communities where Dena'ina are the numeric minority. These communities do not have significant markers of their Dena'ina origins. TT, a young Dena'ina man sees language as a means of creating a physical presence in Anchorage, the economic capital of Alaska.

TT¹⁷...[l]ts more than just the language. It's that it's in-that it has a presence, I guess, here and that from my perspective in Anchorage, that if I had a tourist from—who'd never been to Alaska—and if there is a place where I can show them where *our* language exists, it's a physical manifestation of it, whether it be a sign, whether it be some sort of accurate portrayal-just let it be known, I guess, that there is a presence of Dena'ina people in Anchorage and that there is some sort of visual representation of *our* people here (DATE)

The “naming” of places (in this case signs) is a means for language to facilitate group visibility. TT is indicating language could be used as a means of reclaiming place. He uses the term ‘our’ to make a clear distinction between groups. His inference is that ‘our’ people are different, in some way, than the other people in Anchorage. The Dena'ina language, which is physically different than English, is a means of communicating the presence of Dena'ina people in their traditional area that has become highly urbanized and as such has rendered traces of Dena'ina people invisible to the larger community.

For TT, language is a means of making both a group presence ‘known’ and asserting his own essence of individual identity. Typically, language USE is seen as a means of marking ethnic identity, however, for many DLI participants, TT included, the act of *language learning* and *talking about language* facilitate similar goals.

¹⁷ To maintain the anonymity of participants, names are substituted with double letter combinations that make no reference to the participants name (e.g. AA) The code LB represents the interviewer Lindsay Bell. The elipse marks some portion of speech omitted, either a hesitation marker such as “um” or a repetition. Items that appear in square brackets are added by the authors for clarity. The dates following the passages indicate the date of interview. Extended pauses are indicated by a hard return.

Here, individual identity (indicated by “being Indian”) is associated with difference. His Dena’ina identity is one that is received via relation to his Athabascan grandmother and not through shared cultural experiences and practices. For TT, emphasizing difference is a useful means of creating a sense of belonging to the group. This notion of ‘difference’ is echoed by many in the group. The belief is that Dena’ina language holds ‘different’ knowledge than the English language. This aspect of the *ideology of difference* was underscored and adopted by all respondents.

Emphasis on linguistic difference can be useful, but can also be problematic at times. Difference is a highly subjective term. Who decides what is different enough? As previously mentioned (see Footnote 64) Dena’ina has four remaining mutually intelligible dialects. Some Dena’ina view the dialects as strongly differentiating. All of the fluent Dena’ina speaking elders in attendance at the 2005 Dena’ina Language Institute were not speakers of the local dialect. Many local Dena’ina perceived this as a real hurdle to language learning. Many of the Non-Native participants (and initially myself) felt that the emphasis on linguistic difference was unnecessary. In the words of one Non-Native learner,

MM: I wish Kenaitze would get over the dialect hang up (06/06/05)

Only after an interview with a “conservative” Kenai dialect learner did I come to understand the complexity of the issue. JJ is a woman in her late 20’s. She was working for the Kenaitze Indian Tribe at the time of the interview. In the past year she had had some confrontations with co-workers about choosing to learn the local dialect over one of the more readily available dialects. The conflict arose out of a language class meant

from Head start are learning this [Nondalton] dialect. And I said I understand that we don't have anybody to learn from right now, but what happens...everyone's going to learn the Nondalton dialect, the Kenai dialect is gonna be extinct. Yeah, we're gonna learn Dena'ina, but we're are not gonna learn it relevant to, you know, Kenai.

LB: Yeah.

JJ: And it...it is in the culture, its what everyone, you know, that just bugs me, that everyone says]

LB: [So if you say language-culture, oh...they're together]

JJ: Then language-culture should]

LB: [Then they really should]

JJ: Kenai-Kenai. Not...Dena'ina-Dena'ina, then why should it matter if we're learning Tyonek or Iliamna or anyone else's dialect.

LB: Right. Then you're saying the culture's all the same...which is not true.

JJ: It's not true.

LB: That's not true...hmmm

JJ: [Right] (06/07/05)

Like many others, JJ subscribes to essentialized connections between language, culture, and identity, however she subscribes to a local identity over a regional identity. JJ explained to me that traditionally Kenai Dena'ina made use of different natural recourses than Inland Dena'ina. For example, because they lived on the shores of a salt water Inlet, Kenai Dena'ina caught beluga whales. Inland Dena'ina would not have had

this option, and in fact an Inland word for 'beluga' does not exist. Who is to say the connections JJ makes between language and local culture are invalid? TT's assumptions about difference as the basis for identity go unchallenged by the group, whereas JJ's application of the ideology of difference is rejected by many.

The ideological conflict is clear: what level of linguistic difference *merits* a connection to identity? Who decides? For clarity, allow me to reiterate: I raise the questions not so I may settle on an answer of which ideology is 'right' rather I would like to illustrate how complex this line of research can become. More importantly, I would like to examine how *both* applications of the ideology *difference as the basis of identity* may have possibly been influenced by university representatives (both past and present).

The *dialect* issue is very familiar to those involved in language revitalization in Alaska. The Athabaskan language family has 14 *languages* counted for in Alaska. Athabaskan is a dialectal continuum. The decision about what constitutes a *language* in the case of Alaska was not made by individual speech communities. Rather, linguists imposed categories on languages based on their field observations and structural analyses. Where one language starts and another begins is difficult to discern in some areas. Even more difficult is to establish with any certainty where one dialect begins and one ends. Traditionally, many oral language societies viewed dialectal differences as strongly differentiating (Whitely, 2003, p.714) however *formal* categories for dialects were again imposed by Western academics. In the structuralist tradition that dominates American linguistics, the goal of linguistic documentation is to record all variations of a language in order to provide an analysis of the language's behavior in all areas of use. The division of a language into dialects is completed on the basis of linguistic

interpretation of the 'data' and not on language in use or on local perceptions of language 'difference'. Each dialect then is of great value to the linguist as it represents a vital piece to a full collection. When a linguist works with a community they may reinforce the differences between dialects. This process overlooks the importance of non linguistic features of language and the plurilingualism (or pluri-dialectism) that has long been a part of the experience of many oral-language societies (Whiteley, 2003, p.714). Linguists then use documented language to produce materials (dictionaries, phrase books etc) that further canonize the dialectal divisions.

The above describes the careers of many linguists in the second half of the 20th century. The above oversimplifies a linguist's work and it must be noted that 'linguists' don't subscribe to identical ideologies and indeed their field has changed over time. However, it is important for all academics to realize that changes to our fields and our personal methods may not be immediately perceived by the community. For example, many community members attending the DLI are committed to overtly understanding Dena'ina grammar (for example being able to understand the multi-prefix position system, writing verb paradigms etc). Current ANLC faculty, increasingly savvy in second language acquisition theories, know that this type of knowledge (highly privileged by academia) is not necessary, and in fact may hinder, the acquisition of oral abilities. However, the community continues to value this type of information as it has acquired so much symbolic capital over the years through interaction with other field linguists. Further, it may be that the community wants to be able to *control* their language and they feel it is necessary to *control* in the same way the institution does, through linguistic

documentation and analysis. This example teaches us that our presence is never neutral. We don't *just* do linguistic work. We are always doing ideological work.

It may seem like I am siding against JJ's affiliation to a local identity and pointing the finger at 'linguists' and their ideologies for JJ's *mistaken thinking*. Indeed I am not. At the risk of being repetitive, I note again that the discussion is not to prove who is *right* or *wrong*, rather to illustrate potential impacts of institutional involvement in language programming.

Now I will look critically at the fields of second language teaching and applied linguistics to look at some of the ideological assumptions made by academics in these fields (in this case myself) that may impact a community. From my research journal,

The emphasis on dialects seemed to hinder the progression of learning. The dialectal differences are limited. The dialects [are] mutually intelligible, however the learners wanted to be clear that they were getting it 'right' [which involved using the vocabulary from the local dialect]. (Journal, 6/1/05)

It is clear that my own beliefs are steeped in communicative methods for language teaching. My assumption here is that the goal is to learn to speak the language and be understood in the language. As a former French immersion teacher, I am privileging oral capabilities and I am assuming a primary goal of obtaining communicative competency. Through an examination of community goals (see Chapter three) I came to see that my thinking emphasized product (acquired language) over process (meeting socio-emotional goals through language learning). My reactions to the dialect issue become central to how some participants come to decide "*how different*

was different enough?" This following journal entry, details my input to a discussion on dialectal difference,

While the groups were working [on curriculum units] an emotional discussion emerged surrounding 'dialects'. The group from Head Start was intent on collecting Kenaitze dialect to fill their vocabulary sections. Unfortunately, there are no self-identified speakers of this dialect. The students [all non-Dena'ina] said that they felt pressure from the tribe to produce Kenaitze materials, but did not have access to a speaker to help them with their task. Some students felt that Kenaitze [dialect] is dead, and therefore the goal should be to preserve another dialect of Dena'ina of which speakers remain. Others felt just the opposite, because Kenaitze [dialect] is dead [or very close], the group needs to work harder to revive it. One student [BB], (Dena'ina, not of Kenaitze descent, but living here now) finds it insulting that the tribe is trying to dictate his language. He feels that in their institution he can be held to their standards for language use, however for personal use and growth, his language use should not be dictated.

I was involved in the discussion and pointed out that when a language is revitalized it is inevitably changed. Students seem to accept this. To settle their mixed feelings they resolved to write the curriculum in Nondalton [Inland] dialect with the notion that should corrections from the Kenaitze Tribe arise, they will be noted and the curriculum modified. (Journal, 6/7/05)

What are the implications for my assumption that dialectal difference is not different enough? I am (as a *teacher*) empowering a group of non-Dena'ina head start teachers to proceed in the collection and use of an 'outside' dialect. I felt justified at the time of my

comment. My assumption that Dena'ina is Dena'ina and that the Inland dialect is better than nothing was not rooted in an intent to disqualify local identities. My assumptions were that languages were learned in order to be spoken in everyday situations. Therefore mutual intelligibility in my mind was equated with *not different enough*. For the most part, my colleagues and I were looking at the dialect issue from a *practical* perspective. We have Inland speakers at the DLI. We do not have Kenai speakers at the DLI therefore; we will learn the Inland dialect. This *made sense* to us. The strong affiliation to the local dialect just *didn't make sense* therefore we encouraged the students in the curriculum design class to use the *available* dialect: Inland. Again, the purpose isn't to identify my *error* but to raise my own consciousness of how I let my own ideologies affect a group of learners. Like field linguists, applied linguists and language teachers don't *just* teach language and language pedagogy. The process is ideological.

While we may not see ourselves as the appropriate 'decision makers' in the dialectal issue, in practice the very way we talk about language and teach language end up contributing to what gets seen as *right*. By default, we are a part of the decision making process, whether we want to be or not. In the case of the *dialect issue* the outcome that I was able to observe at the 2005 DLI was that some Dena'ina participants, as the institute progressed, began to back away from their connection to local dialect in favor of the more *accessible* dialects. This is not to insinuate that community ideologies are formed exclusively through interactions with the institution, but I think the example provided here shows us that the institution (through both past and present actions) can be a potential contributor. Again the assumption is not that the ideological contributions

of the institution are necessarily negative, however without constant critique and reflection on our part it may become so.

Back to the Beginning: Conclusions and Institutional Implications

As Bourdieu suggests we can't "solve" the problem this research addresses once and for all. We can not rid ourselves of ideologies. Does that mean we have reached a dead end in our discussion of ideologies? Is there any where left to go or have all routes been exhausted? I advise we now return to our point of departure for insight. Education, I believe, is like research: "*an endless labor, endlessly recommenced*" (Bourdieu, 2001:110 my emphasis). Critical pedagogies are a means of addressing issues of ideology and the role of the educator/ institution in their (re)production. We have seen that we are unable to 'neutrally' facilitate language teaching and that we are always acting out our ideologies. Critical pedagogies accept that ideologies are always at work, but contend that they can begin to be understood and changed through critical thinking or ideological critique. I suggest that ideological critique is essential for community and institution alike.

Brookfield outlines the use of critical theories in adult education. In *The Power of critical theory* (2005) Brookfield views critical thinking (ideological critique) as "being able to identify, and then to challenge and change the process by which a grossly iniquitous society uses dominant ideology to convince people this is a normal state of affairs" (viii)¹⁸. Critical theories, critical pedagogies included, suggest that through these critiques social change can emerge. In the post-structuralist sense this process must be continuous as an 'ideal' does not exist. Therefore critical thinking must be ongoing. Most

¹⁸ See also Paolo Friere's consciousness (in *Pedagogy of Hope*, 1995)

importantly, the role of the educator is two fold. Engage in critical reflection about their practice, and challenge and equip students to engage in critical thinking.

For community goals of empowerment and self-determination to be achieved, critical reflection is vital. As educators we can use the DLI as a forum for such practice. When communities make requests of the institution we are not doing our best service when we meet those requests without asking the community to reflect critically on that request. Allow me to illustrate. Take the example of community outcry for lessons in Athabascan linguistics. Its not enough, as a critical educator, to assume that “that’s really what the community wants”, but at the same time its not for the institution to convince the community that it is NOT what they want. The most useful role we can play is to challenge the community to unveil the assumptions that are allowing them to privilege *linguistic knowledge* and for them to evaluate how gaining access to this specific knowledge will move them closer to (or further away from) their goals. Academic knowledge is often privileged by default in Western societies. Freire (1991) argues that as a critical educator you “have to respect [the community’s] knowledge...[further] you have to help them respect their knowledge (p.55).

We have to recognize that the presence of academia in the community is enduring. Again, Paolo Friere (1991) points out that “education is *before*, is *during*, is *after*. [Education] is a process, a permanent process” (p.119, emphasis original). In the context of the DLI, we are all educators-whether we identify with the *educator* label or the *linguist* label. Our educational practices are always ideological and therefore we must be willing to actively identify how these ideologies might be working and who might be benefiting from them working this way.

Looking at ideologies is a very powerful step towards achieving social justice, however from this research I have learned that for it to be truly meaningful, individuals from community and institution would have to engage in the process either together or individually. It is not useful for me to identify in what ways I see the community being hegemonized and then report my findings back to them. That would not be critical pedagogy. The process of deconstructing my own ideologies for the purposes of this work was very powerful for me both personally and professionally. I can not assume that the profoundness of the exercise is wholly transferable; in the end it may benefit me most. Although complicated, the process of recursive research of ideologies is an excellent opportunity for growth. I believe as educators/ researchers we should continuously challenge ourselves to extend this opportunity to the community and to ourselves.

CHAPTER 5

Summary

The two research papers presented here illustrate that, indeed, indigenous language learning is connected to empowerment and self-determination as suggested by Aboriginal scholar Iseke-Barnes (2004). Goals examined (fluency, literacy, community building, and cultural knowledge) connected back to broader themes of visibility, healing and resistance. These themes are interconnected forms of, and tools for, **empowerment**. Given these goals it becomes important for the institution to be critical of the ideological assumptions that guide our practice. Without such reflectivity we may be inadvertently interfering with community goals. Assessing ideologies (both of community and institution) is not an easy task. Ideologies are complex and ever changing. They are rarely cohesive within an individual, let alone within a diverse group like DLI participants or UAF faculty/staff. Engaging community in their own ideological critique may be more fruitful, and more constitutive of community empowerment goals than designing a research study that aims to complete this task. From this work I put forth three central recommendations that begin to address the question first posed in the introduction: How can a university be involved in Indigenous language planning in a manner that respects Indigenous rights?

Three Recommendations for Institutional Practice

1. *Emphasize language learning process over language product*

An examination of community goals revealed that participants were using the process of language learning to meet socio-emotional goals for self and group.

Ideological assumptions of language teaching (in terms of contemporary SLAT⁷⁸) are heavily concerned with acquiring proficiencies in a timely manner. This assumption overlooks possible roles language can play in the Indigenous learner's life. We see that language goals go beyond the typical instrumental/integrative binary model applied to most language learning contexts. This suggests that language learning strategies used at the DLI should be considerate of non-fluency goals of the participants. Further, whenever possible, 'process' goals should be written into grant proposals as product goals can not address the issues most pressing to the language learners in this study.

2. Continuously challenge institutional ideologies

Chapter 4 was unable to 'identify' ideologies as planned, however it made it very clear that all work is ideological. Institutional representatives, regardless of field, are educators and therefore have the power to use their role to assist in the deconstruction of dominant ideologies or to uphold the current unequal social order. We can't 'not get involved' in issues of empowerment. Our very presence involves us. As such, we must be willing to continually examine the ideological assumptions made in our curriculum, methods, and models for instruction. We need to be willing to challenge ourselves as individual professionals, but also be willing to challenge each other in hopes for greater movement towards teaching for equality.

3. Continuously challenge community ideologies

The critical educator unmask power at work within their own practice. The critical educator also challenges students to do the same. Critical thinking and ideological critique are most meaningful when you do them yourself. It's not a

worthwhile project to critique ideology *for* the community. What would be useful is *engaging* the community *in* ideological critique. This may mean overtly discussing ‘political’ ideas like hegemony and power.

Limitations & Suggestions for Future Research

I will briefly summarize three limitations of this study in order to lay possible groundwork for future research with respect to language goals and ideologies in Indigenous language learning settings.

1. Limited data set

Interviews can be very useful tools, however, given the research questions and analytic intentions of Chapter four they were not a sufficient source of data to comfortably discuss ideological assumptions held by communities. For those interested in *ideology* observation and recorded conversational data may be most useful. Even with the selected interview style used (semi-structured, in depth) I felt that the realm of the conversations were still very limited by me and the questions I designed. Issues that seemed to occur frequently may have been a result of the question rather than relative importance to participants.

2. Place-Bound

I would like to stress here that the Dena’ina are a very diverse group of people. This study is based primarily on urban, middle class Dena’ina learners from the Kenai area. The goals expressed by this group are not necessarily transferable to other communities or other individuals not included in the study.

institution-community relationships with Alaska Native communities. How can a university be involved in Indigenous language planning in a manner that respects Indigenous rights? Simply by continually asking ourselves and the community this very question.

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APPENDIX

Interview Protocol

Phase 1: Life History

Describe the communities you have lived in, thinking specifically about cultures and languages of those communities.

How would you describe your schooling experiences as a child and as an adolescent? (Positive? Negative? Examples?)

Describe your work history.

What languages are a part of your family history?

Describe how you became interested in learning Dena'ina.

Phase 2: Details of Experience

Can you describe your experiences with the institute?

Describe the experience of learning Dena'ina, for you. How do you learn, what strategies help you?

In what contexts do you imagine using Dena'ina?

What are your goals in attending this institute?

Phase 3: Reflection on the Meaning

What does successful language revitalization look like in your opinion?

What organizations should be involved in helping people to learn Dena'ina? What role should these organizations play? (Tribes, University, Individuals)

For you, what is the connection between language and culture?

What role do language and culture play in the way in which you see yourself?

Is there anything else you would like to add?